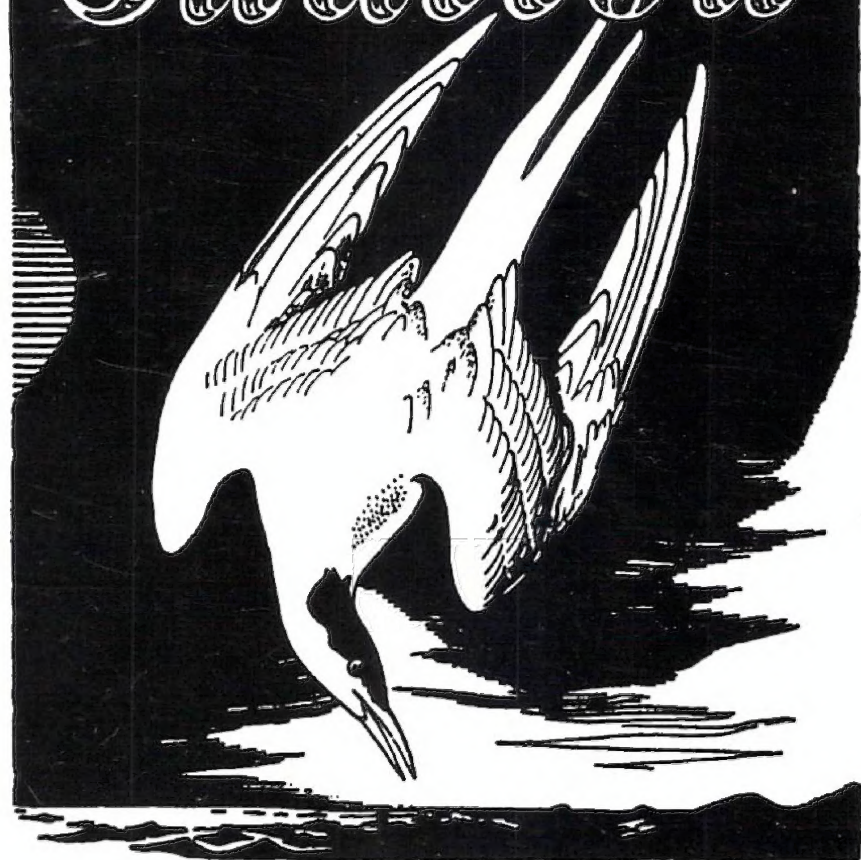


# *the Sea Swallow*



BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE ROYAL NAVAL  
BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

## ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

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For details of local representatives and other useful addresses see inside back cover.

*Subscription rates.* Full and Associate Members £8 (£7 if covenanted) annually.

Library rates - Cost of *Sea Swallow* (£6) plus postage.

*Membership* has been widened for the R.N. to include all those who share a common background - the sea itself - regardless of nationality.\*

*Aims and activities.* The primary aim of the Society is to promote a forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of landbirds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore.

*RNBWS Record Forms.* Standardised forms for recording Seabirds and Landbirds at sea. Seabird Census sheets, Bird examined in the Hand (BEH) forms have been designed for use at sea. Stocks are kept by Warrant Officer C. A. R. Bailey, 8 Grange Close, Gosport Hants. PO12 3DX. (Tel: 0705 526264). Please give detailed requirements and enclose a large stamped and addressed envelope.

Completed record forms (both seabirds and landbirds) should be sent to Michael Casement.

Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor (see instructions to authors inside back cover).

\*an application form for membership is at page 80 in this edition of *Sea Swallow*.





Upper: Magellan Snipe *Gallinago magellanica magellanica*.  
 Lower: Kelp Goose *Chloephaga hybrida* ♂ and ♀ (foreground).  
 Motley Island, East Falklands - January 1995.  
 Photos: Commander C.C. Peach RN.

## PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

As we prepare for what looks likely to be a Jubilee bumper year in 1996 - an expedition to Madeira; a special AGM attended we hope by our patron HRH the Duke of Edinburgh; a commemorative edition of *Sea Swallow* - it is easy to overlook this year's efforts and successes. Much of the evidence is tucked away in these pages, with I hope something for everyone; the serious student, the enthusiast, the young and the not so young. Some members seem to fall into three if not all four of these categories, and one such (and I hope he will not mind me mentioning it) is Leading Airman Chris Patrick; young, keen, already very knowledgeable, and putting his experience to good use not only in the RNBWS but in just about every other bird club it would seem. He has just completed his third antarctic trip in HMS *Endurance*, and is now at RNAS Portland; we have high hopes of him in the future.

Another small success: you will see reference to a new member in Michael Barritt's piece below. That new member is Captain Johannsen, a Commander in the German Naval Reserve, and he in turn has just recruited our first member from the former Warsaw Pact - Commander Banica of the Romanian Navy, the harbourmaster of the port of Constanta on the Black Sea. The story has a pleasing ring to it: Johannsen faxed the suggestion that Banica might be eligible to join to Michael Casement, just as Johannsen's ship was leaving Piraeus for Norfolk Virginia. MBC very promptly replied "Good idea, and when you reach Norfolk I suggest you call on Mike Barritt" That faxed reply was received by the ship's agent in Piraeus, and he rushed the message out to Johannsen by fast motor boat. A happy story, that. More please.

DAVID DOBSON President

## CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I was delighted by a recent visit to SACLANT HQ by one of our newer members. Our meeting revealed that he was "recruited" after spotting a reference to RNBWS in *The Marine Observer*, that he and his watch-keepers are now fully engaged in our core task of observation and recording, and that he has already brought in at least one other new member. I hope that his enthusiasm will prove contagious. He puts us all on our mettle.

*Sea Swallow* 44 contains plenty of material indicating the opportunities for interesting fieldwork which our members are seizing and, looking ahead, I am happy to report that our plan for the first RNBWS members expedition is on track for our Jubilee Year of 1996. I hope that you are making personal plans to mark the Jubilee in some way, at the very least by joining us at the special AGM.

MICHAEL BARRITT Chairman



## EDITORIAL

Despite initial fears that this volume would be rather thin, I am pleased to publish a larger number of short articles from some of our newer and younger members. There is a wide range of articles, to suit all interests, I hope. At page 78 is some guidance about birdwatching at sea, and the priorities for reports (para 4). First priority is given in *Sea Swallow* to observations aboard ship, and seabirds ashore, but a new feature this year is a section titled "Observations Ashore" to accommodate the increasing number of contributions under that heading.

It is good to see a report of the BRNC survey of Motley Island, E. Falklands (pp30-37), and David Simpson again seeks our help and support in establishing a conservation area on the Fly River (p.69). Do please respond, if you can.

I thank all contributors for their material this year, and especially Captain Neil Cheshire for his analysis of seabird reports. But he has been doing this major task for the past eight years, and has now asked for a respite, in order to devote more time to birdwatching himself. Bill Bourne has therefore kindly agreed to resume this annual analysis next year.

*Sea Swallow* 45 will be our Golden Jubilee edition, and we plan a larger and more lavish volume, probably including some colour photographs (if we can afford it) and possibly a redesigned front cover. I shall be calling on selected members to take on extra tasks for this, but it is not too early for volunteers to offer suggestions for contributions, and help. Please let me know.

MICHAEL CASEMENT

## SEABIRD NAMES

There has been one further long set of comments on our proposed English names for seabirds (*Sea Swallow* 42: 16-27, 43: 70-72) from M.J. Earp correcting a number of misprints and advocating more adherence to currently conventional usage; in the absence of further comments we are considering the production of a definitive version, as a separate publication.

W.R.P.B. and M.B.C.

## NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED IN 1994

By Captain N.G.Cheshire, MN.

This year has seen a slight increase in the number of observers and considerable growth in the volume of observations. Particularly welcome is the increase in the number of Bird in the Hand reports which are very useful. Thanks to all observers for their detailed and interesting reports. We have had particularly good coverage from the SW Atlantic- Falklands-South Georgia-Antarctic Peninsula and west coast of South America in the Austral Summer thanks to the efforts of C. Patrick, A.H.Todd and G.H.Walton.

### OBSERVERS SENDING NOTES DURING 1994

LSA M. Cutts M.V. Scillonian III Scilly Is.-Penzance, Oct'94 (1R).

Stephen Hales & Derek Hallet M.V. Val de Loire Plymouth-Santander-Plymouth, Apr'94 (11C); M.V.Quiberon Plymouth-Roscoff-Plymouth Aug'94, Plymouth-Roscoff-Plymouth Oct'94, (7C).

Radio Officer M.G.Finn M.V. Lady Marialaura Liverpool-New York-Baltimore-Houston-New York-Le Havre, Nov'93-Jan'94, (4C); Liverpool--New York-Savanna-Vera Cruz-Houston-New York-Le Havre, Feb-Apr'94, (5C); M.V. Enrico Fermi Rotterdam-Galveston-Panama-Honolulu-S.Korea, Sept-Oct'94, (5C).

Capt.P.W.Jackson M.V. Seki Cedar NW Europe- W.Mediterranean Jan-Feb'93,(1R); NW Europe-Durban-Réunion Feb-Mar '94, S.Africa-Teesport, Mar-Apr'94, (6C,1R).

CPO G.A.Johnson M.V. Wild Lily UK-North Sea-Baltic Waters, Mar-May'94, (2R).

Sandy King S.T.V. Soren Larsen UK-Tenerife-Antigua Nov-Dec'93; Panama-Tahiti Apr-May'94; Tahiti-Cook Is.-Tonga Jul-Aug '94; Vanuatu-Auckland Oct '94, (7C, 1B, +4 Route Charts).

Capt.A.R.Louch R.R.S. Discovery, Gibraltar-Capetown, Jan-Feb '94, (2C).

LA(METOC) C. Patrick, HMS Hecla Plymouth-Gibraltar-Persian Gulf-Oman-Djibouti, Jan-Aug'91 (9R); HMS Endurance, Portsmouth-Fortaleza-Montevideo, Dec'92 (7C); Montevideo-Falklands-Antarctica-Punta Arenas, Jan-Feb '93 (6C); Falklands-S.Georgia-S.Sandwich Is-Antarctica-Valparaiso Feb-Apr'93, (4C,1B); Portsmouth-Recife-Falklands, Dec'93 (5C,3B). Tropical Atlantic Apr'94 (5B).

Capt.K.Salwegter Indonesian Coastal Vessel Bali Ambon via Lesser Sundas Sept-Oct'93 (2N).

A.H.Todd RFA Diligence E.Falklands-S.Georgia, Nov-Apr'94 (23C,4R).

Capt.J.Trinder RN. yacht Kairos II, Fijian Waters Aug'94 (1R).

PO (Comms) G.H.Walton RFA Gold Rover Falklands area-Valparaiso-Callao-Panama-Barbados-Portsmouth Feb-Apr'94 (25C 1R); RFA Fort Austin, Mediterranean Oct, Dec'94 (2R).

**Key.** R-RNBWS Report Sheets, C-RNBWS Census Sheets, N-other notes,  
B-RNBWS Bird examined in hand (BEH) Forms.

### NOTES ON SPECIES

(Dates: All dates given are for 1994, unless otherwise shown).

#### PENGUINS *SPHENISCIDAE*

**Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*.** Recorded by CP near the Antarctic Peninsula with one at 65.1°S 64°W on 16 Jan'93, eight at 67.7°S 69.8°W on 18 Jan and 16 at 68.9°S 68.5°W on 21 Jan'93.

**Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus*.** In the E.Falklands area AHT had a maximum count of 52 in San Carlos Water on 5 Jan. GHW recorded 15 in the Chilean 'canals' at 44.7°S 73.5°W on 18 Feb. CP saw 11 in the Beagle





King Penguins *Aptenoides patagonicus*, South Georgia 6 March 1994.  
Photo: Lt. Commander S.E. Gaskin RN

Channel, Tierra del Fuego, 55°S 67.4°W on 17 Feb'93 and 30 at 53.9°S 37.8°W near coast of S. Georgia on 10 Mar'93.

#### ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. AHT reported a few from the E. Falkland area between late Nov'93 and Jan'94, with largest counts of four at 51.9°S 58.1°W off Choiseul Sound on 30 Nov'93 and four at 52.1°S 57.2°W on 2 Jan. GHW reported five at 52.5°S 51.8°W on 5 Feb. North of the Falklands CP saw one at 49.1°S 57°W on 7 Jan'93 and had several records between Falklands and S. Georgia, with two at 52.1°S 56.9°W on 28 Feb'93, four at 53.2°S 49.9°W on 1 Mar'93, six at 53.9°S 37.8°W on 10 Mar'93. Returning South in Dec'93, he saw the first at 36.8°S 48.9°W (sea temp. 22.3°C) off Uruguay on 27 Dec'93. On a voyage from the Antarctic Peninsula to Valparaiso, he had one at 42.2°S 73°W in the Chilean 'canals' on 6 Apr'93 and one at 36.7°S 73.5°W the next day. In the Western Pacific, JT reported one at 19.5°S 176°E SW of Fiji on 21 Aug and another at 18.5°S 177.2°E on 24 Aug, at about the northern limit of their winter range in this area. North of NZ, SK reported an immature at 31.3°S 170.3°E and nine adults at 33.3°S 172.1°E on 13 and 14 Oct. Dr Bourne has commented that "Royal Albatross is much more common than Wandering over the shelf around the Falklands and in the Chilean Canals and perhaps all round S. America" so we may be getting some confusion between the two species.

Short-tailed Albatross *Diomedea albatrus*. Two birds seen in the distance by MGW off the E coast of Japan at 36.3°N 141°E on Apr 21 had dark bodies with white heads and underparts and were tentatively identified as this species.

Laysan Albatross *Diomedea immutabilis*. Three were seen by MGW at 42.5°N 155.8°W in the NW Pacific on 7 May.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys*. Many records from Falklands, South American and South African waters by several observers. Of note was a northern hemisphere sighting by PWJ who had distant views of a definite



A. Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos* (juv). Off Freemantle, March 1981.  
Photo: Captain Neil Cheshire MN.

Albatross, and from the description very likely a Black-browed at 22.7°N 17.4°W off Mauretania on the 7 Apr. In the Falklands area, AHT had a maximum count of 159 in an hour at 51.9°S 57.5°W on 5 Jan. CP had a southerly record of two birds at 60.7°S 56.5°W near the South Shetlands (sea temp. 2.3°C) on 15 Feb'93. Northbound off Chile he saw them to 33°S 71.8°W (two birds) on 8 Apr'93. In the Straits of Magellan at 53.5°S 71.6°W on 18 Feb, GHW saw a Humpbacked Whale surface close to 15 Black-brows and 30 Wilson's Storm-petrels. The albatrosses and storm-petrels had a frenzy of feeding for about ten minutes, presumably on krill or similar driven to the surface by the whale. Southern Giant Petrels and Chilean Skuas nearby were not interested.

**Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta*.** A single record from the SW Atlantic from CP who described in detail one seen in Uruguayan waters at 34.4°S 52.9°W on 29 Dec'92.

**Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*.** Recorded in the SW Atlantic between 32.8°S 51.4°W and 45°S 53.4°W in Dec '92 and '93.(CP) In the Indian Ocean, PWJ counted 20 adults at 34.6°S 25°E south of Algoa Bay on 25 Mar.

**Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma*.** CP saw one at 65.2°S 65.5°W near the Antarctic Peninsula (sea temp.1.3°C) on 17 Jan'93 and another at 60.7°S 56.5°W on 15 Feb'93. Small numbers were recorded near S.Georgia in March'93 and Feb'94 by CP and AHT. Ageing of immature Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatrosses using bill colouration, certain plumage characteristics and pattern of moult of flight feathers, based on re-traps of known age birds is described by Prince and Rodwell (1994) who also provide an excellent series of photographs.

**Buller's Albatross *Diomedea bulleri*.** An interesting record from CP who described a bird seen well at 26.1°S 74.2°W off Chile on 14 Apr'93.

**Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*.** A completely dark brown *phoebastria* albatross with a pale bill stripe was identified by AHT as this species on 8 Mar at 52.7°S 47°W, about midway between Falklands and S.Georgia. Further north, CP reported one at 41.1°S 51.2°W on 28 Dec'93.

**Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*.** Recorded around South Georgia by AHT and CP in Mar'93 and '94. CP also saw one near the South Sandwich Is. at 59.3°S 27.5°W (sea temp.1.0°C) on 15 Mar'93 and two at 58.9°S 40.9°W on 31 Mar'93. A vagrant was recently seen on a chartered birding trip over Cordell Banks off California on 17 Jul 1994 (Morlan 1994).



## PROCELLARIIDA

### FULMARS AND PRIONS *FULMARINAE*

Southern Giant Petrel *Macronektes giganteus*. Several records from CP around the Antarctic peninsula including one at 62.5°S 59°W on 12 Jan'93, two at 63.5°S 61.2°W (sea temp. 0.5°C) on 26 Mar'93. GHW had several records in Strait of Magellan in Feb'94 and recorded them north to 44.7°S 73.5°W (13 birds) in the Chilean 'canals' on 16 Feb.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*. Numerous records from the Bay of Biscay and Western Approaches by various observers. GAJ observed 50+ in the North Sea at 56.3°N 04.9°E on 19 Jan.

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*. Seen around the Antarctic Peninsula by CP who had seven at 62.5°S 59°W on 12 Jan'93, five at 67.7°S 69.8°W (sea temp. 0°C) on 18 Jan'93 and 15 at 63.5°S 61.2°W on 26 Mar'93. He also recorded nine at 59.3°S 27.5°W near the South Sandwich Is. on 15 Mar'93. In the Falklands area, AHT did not observe the species until autumn when there were three at 51.6°S 59.2°E on 23 Apr. He later saw 55 at 52.3°S 59.9°W off Falkland Sound on 25 Apr, 10 at 52.4°S 59.1°W N of Sea Lion Is. on 26 Apr and 50+ at 52.4°S 58.8°W later the same day.

Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*. CP saw one at 67.6°S 69.8°W (sea temp 0°C) on 18 Jan'93 and counted 29 in 30 minutes at 63.5°S 61.2°W.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense*. AHT saw the species around the East Falklands between 30 Nov and 5 Dec'93 with a maximum count of 100 at 52°S 58.1°W east of Choiseul Sound on 1 Dec. He later saw a single bird at 51.9°S 58.3°W on 11 Jan. Around the Antarctic Peninsula, CP counted 22 at 62.9°S 59.9°W (sea temp. 1.9°C) on 3 Feb'93, 30 at 60.7°S 56.5°W on 15 Feb and 27 at 63.5°S 61.2°W (sea temp. 0.5°C) on 26 Mar'93. It was also recorded north of NZ by SK who saw two at 31.3°S 170.3°E and seven at 33.3°S 172.1°E on 13 and 14 Oct.

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*. A few records usually near ice around the Antarctic Peninsula from CP who had a maximum count of nine on ice at 67.8°S 70.5°W (sea temp. -0.9°C) on 28 Jan'93 and saw three at 61.7°S 53.3°W on 24 Mar'93 whilst on passage from the South Sandwich Is. to Antarctica.

Kerguelen Petrel *Lugensa brevirostris*. CP saw the species between the Falklands and South Sandwich Islands with one at 52.1°S 56.9°W on 28 Feb'93, one at 59.3°S 27.5°W on 15 Mar'93 and thereafter towards the Antarctic Peninsula with records of one at 58.7°S 26.6°W on 18 Mar and three at 58.9°S 40.9°W on 21 Mar'93.

Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*. A Bird in the Hand Form was received from CP at 54°S 37.4°W near S. Georgia on 10 Mar'93.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*. CP counted 24 at 59.8°S 57.8°W, NW from Elephant Island on 11 Jan'93 and another three at 59.3°S 27.5°W near the South Sandwich Is. on 15 Mar'93 (sea temp. 1.0°C).

Mascarene Petrel *Pterodroma aterrima*. A tentative record of 50 from PWJ at 22°S 55.8°E, 10nm WNW from Reunion, who reported completely dark brown petrels about same size as Great-winged that were active close to the water, however there was possibly confusion with Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. Reported from South African waters by PWJ who saw 60, singles and in groups, at 34.7°S 18.9°E on 28 Feb and 50 the next day at 34.2°S 25.4°E off Port Elizabeth. It was also seen north

of NZ by SK, with eight at 29.6°S 168.1°E on 12 Oct, three at 31.3°S 170.3°E and three at 33.3°S 172.1°S on 13 and 14 Oct.

**White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*.** A single bird from 29.6°S 168.1°E north of NZ on 12 Oct was described by SK.

**Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*.** Recorded in the SW Atlantic by CP, who saw them in small numbers within the limits 31.3°S 50°W to 44.5°S 56.5°W, Dec'92-Jan'93 and 27.4°S 44.5°W to 41.10 51.4°W in Dec'93. Sea temperature range for these sightings 15°C-25.3°C.

**Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae*.** CP saw one showing partial breast-band at 34.6°N 1°W, ENE from Madeira on 10 Dec'92.

**Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*.** CP saw three with complete breast-bands at 32.3°S 51°W off S Brazil on 28 Dec'92. He had two records from well south - one bird at 52.1°S 56.9°W and four at 53.2°S 49.9°W (sea temp. 8.8°C) SE from the Falklands on the 28 Feb and 1 Mar'93. AHT described several seen between the Falklands and S. Georgia. He recorded two at 52.8°S 42.2°W on 28 Feb, eight later the same day at 52.9°S 41.6°W, three at 52.8°S 43.9°W on 8 Mar, nine at 52.4°S 50.8°W on 9 Mar and two later that day at 52.2°S 53.3°W.

**Juan Fernandez Petrel *Pterodroma externa*.** GHW described two that flew close to his ship 25m above the water for about 15 minutes at 35°S 73.3°W near the Chilean coast on 22 Feb. CP described one seen in same area at 36.7°S 73.3°W on 7 Apr'93 and another at 26.6°S 74°W on 14 Apr'93.

**Stejneger's Petrel *Pterodroma longirostris*.** Seen and described in detail by CP who saw 20 in 20 minutes at 36.7°S 73.5°W on 7 Apr'93 and 11 at 26.6°S 74°W on 14 Apr'93 (sea temp. 12.9-20.8°C)

**Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*.** In the tropical Atlantic, CP saw 18 single birds from 15 Dec-17 Dec'92 between 9.8°N 28.9°W and 01.6°S 36.7°W. He also recorded two at 6.1°N 27.2°W on 9 Dec'93. KS reported one without details at c. 08°S 126°E near Alor, Lesser Sundas, on 24 Sept'93. In the Pacific, MGF described one seen at 22°N 160.9°W east of Hawaii on 30 Sept.

**Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*.** Reported by CP from waters off Oman with one at 20.7°N 59.7°E on 5 Aug'91, one at 18.8°N 58.3°E on 6 Aug and 14 later that day at 18.2°N 57.7°E. Further SW he saw one at 13°N 46.8°E in the Gulf of Aden on 9 Aug'91.

## SHEARWATERS PROCELLARIINAE

**Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*.** This species was seen by AHT on passage from S. Georgia to E. Falkland with one at 52.7°S 47°W on 8 Mar, six at 52.4°S 50.8°W on 9th, eight the same day at 52.2°S 53.3°W and a single at 52°S 56.8°W on 10 Mar.

**White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*.** On passage from Gibraltar to Capetown, ARL saw the first at 22.8°S 08.8°E (sea temp. 22°C) on 10 Feb. PWJ also recorded them in South African waters with counts of 50 in singles and groups at 34.2°S 25.4°E near Algoa Bay on 1 Mar and another 50 close by at 34.6°S 25°E on 25 Mar. Northbound, he saw the last two at 16.2°S 02.2°E (sea temp. 2.5°C). There were many records from the SW Atlantic: CP saw 12 at 31.3°S 50°W on 28 Dec'92 and one at 33.4°S 47.3°W (sea temp. 2.5°C) on 26 Dec'93. AHT had regular summer sightings around East Falkland and South Georgia, with ten at 51.9°S 58.1°W on 30 Nov'93 and 25 in Stromness Hr. S. Georgia, on 2 Mar. GHW saw six at 39.2°S 74.3°W NW of Valdivia on 21 Feb.



Parkinson's Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*. A medium-large all black petrel, with a white bill and dark tip described by SK from 25.9°S 108.7°W near Easter Island on 10 May'94 was probably this species.

Westland Petrel *Procellaria westlandica*. There is a record of two of the NZ breeding Westland Petrel from the Beagle Channel, Tierra del Fuego in Nov'90 and other reports of this species off southern South America. (Whitney and Stejskal 1992). Observers in this area may like to check sightings of the very similar White-chinned Petrel for a black tip to the bill and the likelihood of wing-moult between Nov and Feb which would indicate Westland Petrel.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*. MGW recorded 2000+ in 30 minutes at 35.3°S 141°E off E. Japan on 21 Apr.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. Many winter records from the tropical Atlantic extending south to Argentinian and South African waters. Records of note include the first southbound seen by PWJ at 11.3°N 17.5°W off Guinea Bissau on 17 Feb and 40 seen at 06.2°S 05.3°W on 21 Feb, and 70 seen by same observer at 34.2°S 25.4°E near Algoa Bay on 1 Mar. CP saw one at 41.1°S 51.2°W, off Argentina on 28 Dec'93. In the North Atlantic, GHW saw 10 at 48.3°N 06.2°W on 13 Apr.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*. One was reported by KS near Alor, Lesser Sundas c.08°S 126°E on 24 Sept'93. MGF saw six dark and pale morph birds at 22°N 160.9°E W of Hawaii on 30 Sept.

Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*. GHW reported several off west coast of South America with four gliding low over the sea at 35°S 73.3°W on 22Feb, a group of six at 31.7°S 72°W on 28 Feb, and nine singly and in small groups at 26°S 73°W on 1 Mar. An unusual report, however, the species was collected by Beck off Valparaiso (33°S 71.7°W) between 24 Feb and 12 Mar 1914 (Murphy 1936), and the population has increased greatly during the last fifty years since the eradication of feral pigs from the breeding islands off northern New Zealand.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*. A number of reports from CP during Aug'91 from the N. Arabian Sea, including four singles at 22°N 60°E on 5th, 11 at 15.9°N 54°E on 7th, and one at 13°N 46.8°W in Gulf of Aden on 9th. KS reported without details two from N coast of Flores, Indonesia, c.08°S 121°E on 21 Sep'93.

Pink-footed Shearwater *Puffinus creatopus*. Reported in small numbers by CP between 41.2°S 73.1°W and 36.7°S 73.5°W near the breeding area in Chile on 6-7 Apr'93.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. Numerous records by various observers from the normal North and South Atlantic range. AHT recorded his first in the E. Falklands area, one at 51.3°S 57.7°W on 3 Jan, eight at 51.9°S 57.5°W on 10 Jan and 15 at 52°S 56.9°W on his way to South Georgia on 26 Feb. On his return voyage to the Falklands, AHT encountered a notable passage of Great Shearwaters which lasted most of the day on 9 Mar, (noon posn. 52.4°S 52°W). He conservatively estimated 600 birds/hour overtaking his ship all heading west into a strong westerly wind. This passage was presumably a movement of non-breeding birds as the main departure of adults from the breeding colonies is not until mid-April. He also saw two at 52.6°S 59.4°W off W. Falkland on 25 Apr. CP counted 25 at 39.5°S 55.5°W on 5 Jan'93. Off South Africa, PWJ recorded 100+ at 34.6°S 25°E nr. Algoa Bay on 25 Mar.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. Many reports from the Falklands and from

Straits of Magellan and northward along the Chilean coast, where AHT recorded nine at 36.1°S 74°W, and two final birds at 35°S 73.3°W on 22 Feb. CP saw 70 nearby at 33°S 71.8°W on 8 Apr'93 and 120 at 39.5°S 55.5°W off Argentina on 5 Jan'93. AHT saw one at 53.8°S 38.1°W near South Georgia on 1 Mar. MGW observed 250+ on passage flying north off E. coast of Japan at 35.3°N 141°E on 21 Apr. The first records from American Samoa of two birds in emaciated condition obtained in May'92 and May'94 have now been reported. (Grant, *et al* 1994)

**Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*.** The usual records from NW European waters and from the wintering area in the SW Atlantic where CP saw 30 at 39.5°S 55.5°W on 5 Jan'93 and one the next day at 44.3°S 56.5°W.

**Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*.** Two were reported by CP on 21 Jan'91 at 36.7°N 09.7°W well SW from Cape St. Vincent.

**Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*.** One described by CP from 14.5°N 25.4°W S of Cape Verde Islands on 14 Dec'92. In the SW Pacific, SK reported four from 27.5°S 169°E north of Norfolk Island on 11 Oct'94.

**Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*.** CP recorded 12 singles 10nm off Fujaira, UAE, on 13 Feb'91, and one at 22°N 60°E near Oman on 5 Aug'91.

## STORM-PETRELS HYDROBATIDAE

**Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*.** A number of records in the Falklands area where AHT counted 100 following his ship at 51.9°S 58.1°W on 30 Nov'93. GHW saw 20 at 42.8°S 73.5°W near Chiloe I. on 21 Feb. CP recorded small numbers off the Antarctic Peninsula, a single bird at 67.7°S 69.8°W (sea temp. 0°C) on 18 Jan'93, and five at 59.3°S 27.5°W nr. South Sandwich Is. on 15 Mar'93. He also provided a BEH Form from 64.7°S 64°W near Palmer Station, Antarctica on 8 Mar'94. In the Indian Ocean, CP had several records from the wintering area off Oman with a count of 180 in 20 minutes at 21.6°N 60°E on 5 Aug'91.

**Grey-backed Storm-petrel *Garrodia nereis*.** AHT described one seen closely at 52.4°S 50.8°W between S. Georgia and Falkland Is. on 9 Mar'94.

**White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*.** There were several records from Cape Verde Is. area from CP who saw two at 20.2°N 21.5°W on 13 Dec'92, three at 15.7°N 24.6°W the next day and one at 15°N 22.8°W on 7 Dec'93. CP also submitted three BEH Forms from Peruvian waters, one of a bird in moult from 13.9°S 78.8°W and two from 12.0°S 79°W, all on 9 Apr'94. A bird of this species was found dead on American Samoa in Sept'92. (Grant *et al* 1994)

**White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*.** CP described several seen in the SW Atlantic between Uruguay and the Falklands with singles at 41.9°S 55.9°W on 5 Jan'93, at 44.5°S 56.5°W the next day, at 41.1°S 51.2°W on 28 Dec'93 and two nearby on the same day. Sea temperature range for the sightings 15°-16.1°C.

**Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*.** In the SW Atlantic, AHT identified two at 52.7°S 47°W on 8 Mar. Further SW, CP saw one at 60.6°S 58.1°W on 11 Jan'93, and five the following day at 62.5°S 59°W, one at 60.7°S 56.5°W and 58°S 62°W on 15 and 16 Feb'93. He also had one at 59.3°S 27.5°W near the South Sandwich Is. on 15 Mar'93. SK reported one at 31.3°S 170.3°, north of NZ on 13 Oct.

**British Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*.** In the English Channel, SH +DH counted 21 in 20 minutes at 49.3°N 04.1°W on 17 Aug.

**Galapagos Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma tethys*.** CP saw 15 at 07.6°S 80.7°W, off Peru on 17 Apr'93.



**Madeiran Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma castro*. Observed by CP in the Atlantic between 36.5°N 12.6°W and 02.7°N 33.6°W, 10-16 Dec'92, with the maximum count of 26 in 40 minutes at 21.2°N 21°W off Mauretania. He remarked that at close range some birds showed a small dark crescent at the rear of the white rump on each side. This would be the black tips of the white upper tail coverts showing, and may be a useful field mark. CP recorded the species in 1993 with six at 03.4°S 81.7°E, off Ecuador on 18 Apr, one at 08.0°N 79.3°W on 20 Apr, in the Atlantic, two at 15°N 22.8°W on 7 Dec and five at 6.1°N 27.2°W on 9 Dec. He also sent in a BEH Form for one in moult that came aboard at 02.3°N 80.4°W off Ecuador on 13 Apr'94.

**Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. A few records from the tropical and sub-tropical Atlantic. Also from the Atlantic four BEH Forms were sent in, with one from SK from 18.6°N 36.9°W on 4 Dec and from CP at 14.1°N 23.2°W on 7 Dec'93, at 6.1°N 27.2°W on 9 Dec and one at 05.9°S 33.4°W off Brazil on 12 Dec'93.

**Markham's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma markhami*. CP gave a full description of eight seen between 26.6°S 74°W and 07.6°S 80.7°W from 14-17 Apr'93.

**Black Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma melania*. Five singles were reported by GHW at 06.6°S 81.6°W off northern Peru on 9 Mar. He saw them criss-crossing in front of the bow with deep wing beats. One was also seen by CP at c.08.4°N 79.3°W on 20 Apr'93.

**Hornby's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma hornbyi*. One was described by CP from 26.6°S 74°W, off central Chile on 14 Apr'93.

#### TROPICBIRDS PHAETHONITIDAE

**Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus*. In the eastern tropical Pacific, CP saw one at 09.2°S 80.4°W on 17 Apr'93, and GHW had two fly around his ship at 0.4°N 81.4°W off Ecuador on 10 Mar. MGF saw one at 08.3°N 85.8°W on 14 Sept. In the Arabian Sea, CP recorded one at 22°N 60°E on 12 Feb'91, had two following his ship at 18.8°N 58.3°E on 6 Aug'91, and saw two on the water at 15.9°N 54°E on 7 Aug'91.



White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus fulvus*  
Christmas Is. November 1987.  
Photo: Captain Neil Cheshire MN.

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*. SK recorded one in the South Pacific, at 18.1°S 163.9°W, near Palmerston I.

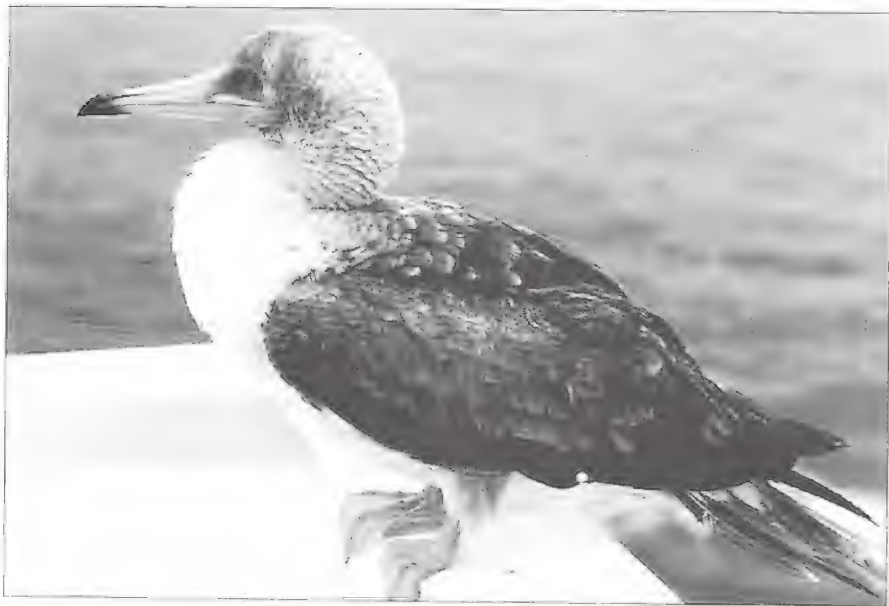
Yellow-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*. PWJ saw one at 22°S 55.8°E near Reunion on 10 Mar. JT recorded one from 18.3°S 177°E in Fijian waters on 20 Aug. In Indonesia, KS reported one off the north coast of Flores and three in the Boleng Strait on 21 Sept'93. In the tropical Atlantic, GHW observed one over a fishing boat at 12.8°N 59.9°W south of Barbados on 18 Mar.

#### GANNETS AND BOOBIES SULIDAE

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*. In Portuguese waters, CP recorded 450 at 39.2°N 09.9°W on 20 Jan'91, and GAJ saw 200+ adults and immatures at 36.9°N 09.0°W near Cape St. Vincent on 28 Jan. In western approaches to Straits of Gibraltar, GAJ saw 40+ adults and immatures at 36°N 06.7°W on 25 Jan. Further south in the area of upwelling off Mauretania, PWJ counted ten 1st years, five 2nd/3rd years and three 4th year birds at 22.7°N 17.4°W, on 7 Apr'94. ARL recorded eight adults and one immature at 27°N 14°W, SE from the Canaries on 29 Jan'94.

Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*. Heading south, PWJ observed a juvenile at 30.9°S 14.6°E on 27 Feb. In South African waters, he saw 100+ in groups at 34.7°S 18.9°E on 28 Feb and 1000+ adults and immatures at 34.2°S 25.4°E near Bird I., Algoa Bay.

Peruvian Booby *Sula variegata*. GHW saw 50+ in the approaches to Valparaiso on 23 Feb, one at 31.7°S 72°W on 28 Feb, seven at 14.4°S 77°W on 3 Mar, and large numbers at Callao on 4 Mar. CP saw 26 at 32.4°S 71.7°W near Valparaiso on 13 Apr'93.



Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* (Immature ♀ with unusual face and bill markings), Torres Straits (Australia), 3 July'94.

Photo: Captain Thomas Johannsen MN.

NOTE. Blue tip to bill and around eye suggests Abbott's Booby *Sula abbotti*, but pink legs and feet rule this out.



**Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*.** Many records from the tropical oceans. Records of note include seven seen by CP at 22°N 60°E off Ras al Hadd on 12 Feb'91. He also saw 11 in the tropical Atlantic at 03.9°S 32.4°W near Fernando de Noronha on 12 Dec'93. In Chilean waters in March, GHW saw one at 26°S 73°W on 1st, another at 20°S 75.5°W on 2nd attempting to catch flying fish, and further north, 20 at 16.2°S 76.4°W on 3rd. CP saw 15 at 08.4°N 79.3°W in the Gulf of Panama on 20 Apr'93.

**Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*.** CP saw 30 at 14.5°N 42.5°E in the southern Red Sea on 8 Feb'91. In the Pacific, GHW saw one at 06.6°S 81.6°E on 9 Mar, and MGF recorded 15 at 07°N 81°W after leaving Panama.

**Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*.** On passage from Panama to Honolulu, MGF observed them daily from 14-28 Sep, between 8.3°N 85.8°W and 21.3°N 156.7°W, often perched on the ships masts. His maximum count was 12 at 13°N 104.4°W on 18th. He also saw singles at 23.8°N 172.7°W and at 25.1°N 163.2°W on 2 and 8 Oct. In the Atlantic, CP saw three at 03.9°S 32.4°W on 12 Dec'93.

#### **CORMORANTS AND SHAGS *PHALACROCORACIDAE***

**Olivaceous Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*.** GHW recorded seven at 42.5°S 73.7°W near Chiloe I. on 18 Feb, 11 at Valparaiso Hr. on 23 Feb, and six at Callao on 4 Mar.

**Imperial Shag *Leucocarbo atriceps*.** GHW saw one in Straits of Magellan at 52.5°S 73.6°W on 16 Feb, 16 near Chiloe I. at 42.8°S 73.5°W on 21 Feb, and two approaching Valparaiso at 32.9°S 71.8°W on 23 Feb. CP saw 19 in Beagle Channel at 55°S 67.4°W on 17 Feb'93.

**Cape Shag *Leucocarbo capensis*.** PWJ saw three well offshore at 30.9°S 14.6°E on 27 Feb and three closer inshore the next day at 34.7°S 18.9°E.

**Red-legged Shag *Stictocarbo gaimardi*.** CP recorded this distinctive shag at 32.4°S 71.7°W near Valparaiso on 13 Apr'93.

**Rock Shag *Stictocarbo magellanicus*.** Recorded by GHW on rocks and buoys in the Chilean 'canals' with a count of 17 at 49°S 74.4°W on 17 Feb and four at 42.8°S 73.5°W on 21 Feb.

#### **FRIGATEBIRDS *FREGATIDAE***

**Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*.** CP recorded six at 22.3°N 85.3°W west of Cuba on 1 May'93 and two at 03.9°S 32.4°W, eight miles off Fernando de Noronha on 12 Dec'93. SK saw ten at 16.2°N 56.4°W approaching the West Indies on 14 Dec'93.

**Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*.** Reported by KS from Indonesia with five near Komodo I. Lesser Sundas on 16 Sept'93 and one off north coast of Damar on 27 Sept'93.

**Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*.** KS reported four near Satonda I. Lesser Sundas on 14 Sept'93 and ten near Komodo I. on 16 Sept'93.

#### **PHALAROPES *PHALAROPODIDAE***

**Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*.** In the Gulf of Oman, CP reported 600 at c.25°N 57°E on 13 Feb'91. Further south he saw nine at 18.8°N 58.3°E on 6 Aug, and five at 16.2°N 54.8°E on 7 Aug'91. In Indonesian waters, KS reported 30 at c.07.5°S 119°E near Flores on 17 Sept'93 and he saw many flocks in Boleng Strait, and in Bay of Lewoleba on 21 Sept'93. On 2 Oct he saw flocks in the Bay of Ambon c.03.6°S 128.3°E and on 9 Oct'93 a flock of 50 in the Sulawesi Sea c.01°N 122°E.

### SHEATHBILLS CHIONIDAE

Yellow-billed Sheathbill *Chionis alba*. AHT recorded two at Stromness Hr. South Georgia, on 1 Mar. CP saw one at 62.5°S 59°W near South Shetlands on 12 Jan'93, and two at 61.7°S 53.3°W on 24 Mar'93.

### SKUAS AND JAEGERES STERCORARIINI

Great Skua *Catharacta skua*. Several records from NW European waters, including one in moult seen by MC at 49.6°N 05.6°W off Cornwall on 15 Oct. On a voyage from Plymouth to Roscoff and return on 17 Aug'94, SH+DH saw one at 50.2°N 04.2°W and another at 49.3°N 04.1°W. During a similar voyage on 3 Oct, they counted 29 in the same area all heading west. CP saw six at 36.3°N 07.5°W in the western approaches to Straits of Gibraltar on 21 Jan'91. GAJ saw three harrying a flock of terns at 38.2°N 0°E off east coast of Spain on 26 Jan. and PWJ saw one nearby at 38.4°N 0°E on 14 Feb'93.



Southern Skua *Catharacta antarctica*, Falklands, 31 December 1993.  
Photo: LA (Metoc) Chris Patrick RN.

Southern Skua *Catharacta antarctica*. Near South Africa, PWJ saw one at 30.9°S 14.6°E on 27 Feb, and six singles the following day at 34.7°S 18.9°E. AHT recorded a few around E. Falkland with a maximum count of seven at 51.9°S 58°W off Choiseul Sound on 3 Dec'93, and three in Stromness Hr. South Georgia on 1 Mar. CP describes the bird as 'a large thickset dark brown skua with a large head and a (relatively) long thick blackish bill'. He saw one at 63.5°S 61.2°W near South Shetlands on 26 Mar'93, and five in SW Atlantic at 36.8°S 48.9°W on 27 Dec'93.

Chilean Skua *Catharacta chilensis*. Recorded in Feb by GHW from the Straits of Magellan and Chilean 'canals' north to 39.2°S 74.3°W NW of Valdivia on 21st. CP saw five in the Beagle Channel at 55°S 67.4°W and remarked that the cinnamon underwing coverts were seen well, but that the grey cap could only be distinguished at close range.

McCormick's Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*. A few records from CP from SW Atlantic and well south around the Antarctic Peninsula, with single birds at 41.9°S 55.9°W on 5 Jan'93, at 67.7°S 69.8°W on 18 Jan, at 68.9°S 68.5°W on 21 Jan, and at 69.1°S 69.4°W on 26 Jan'93. The plumage varied from one with a creamy head and body to a uniformly dark brown bird with a pale streaked nape, and CP remarked that "the small head and (relatively) thin short bill are the most consistent features".

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. ARL reported four at 12.1°N 17.5°W off Guinea on 1 Feb, and PWJ had dark and light phase birds nearby at 11.3°N 17.8°W on 17 Feb. He also saw three off Mauretania at 22.7°N 17.4°W on 7 Apr. CP observed one at 39.5°S 55.5°W in the SW Atlantic on 5 Jan'93. In the Mediterranean, CP saw a light and a dark phase bird at 32°N 30.6°E, north of the Nile delta on 2 Feb'91. MGW described a bird seen in the Suez Canal on 28 Nov. CP also recorded mainly single birds whilst at anchor off Kuwait during Apr'91, and saw one force a Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, into the sea where it killed and ate it!

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*. Recorded often by CP between 11 Mar'91 and 26 Apr'91 whilst at anchor near Kuwait and in the northern Persian Gulf, with a maximum count of four at 29.1°N 48.6°E on 10 Apr. Two singles and a pair were sighted by SH+DH between Plymouth and Roscoff on 3 Oct. MGF reported four at c.26°N 87.5°W in the Gulf of Mexico on 25 Dec'93.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicauda*. CP recorded two in the SW Atlantic at 41.9°S 55.9°W on 5 Jan'93.

## GULLS LARINAE

Grey Gull *Larus modestus*. Seen by CP at 32.4°S 71.7°W near Valparaiso on 13 Apr'93.

Belcher's Gull *Larus belcheri*. CP saw one when sailing from Montevideo on 4 Jan'93. GHW found them 'numerous' in Callao Hr. on 4 Mar where they were harrying terns.

Japanese Gull *Larus crassirostris*. One was seen by MGW well off-shore from Hokaido at 42.5°N 155.8°E on 7 May.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouini*. ARL described two seen close to his ship at 31.5°N 10.4°W off the Atlantic coast of Morocco on 28 Jan, and saw two more the following day at 27°N 14°W SE from the Canaries.

Common Gull *Larus canus*. GAJ recorded four at 46°N 07.6°W in the central Bay of Biscay on 22 Jan, 200 at Ijmuiden on 1 Feb, three in the Baltic off SW Finland at 59.1°N 21.6°E on 9 Feb and 20 in Oslofjord on 28 Mar.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*. CP saw seven at Port Said on 3 Feb'91, and MGW had 14 in the Suez Canal on 28 Nov. To the east, CP reported one at 28.8°N 48.5°E in the northern Persian Gulf on 12 Apr'91. Off NW Africa, ARL saw six adults at 27°N 14°W on 29 Jan, PWJ had six (including two 1st year birds) riding the air wave close to the bow of his ship at 23.7°N 17.1°W on 7 Apr.

Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus*. CP reported 15 in Port Said Hr. on 3 Feb'91.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*. Reported in Jan off the Portuguese coast by CP and GAJ who also saw 30 in Barcelona Hr. on 26 Jan. There are



also a number of reports further east of this species, or Herring Gulls, which unfortunately lack sufficient details to show which of a number of forms of large gull common in that area were involved.

**Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*.** SH+DH recorded 100 in Roscoff Hr. on 17 Aug and 450 there on 3 Oct.

**Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*.** Two of 15 dead Iceland Gulls found on Shetland after the *Braer* stranding, were identified as the Canadian breeding Kumlien's Gull *L. (glaucoides) kumlieni*. (Weir *et al* 1995)

**Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*.** Various records from NW European waters. SH+DH recorded 80 in Roscoff Hr. on 17 Aug, and just two on 3 Oct. Unfortunately, insufficient details were supplied for some more unusual southerly records to show which Black-back was involved.

**Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*.** CP observed one at 34.4°S 52.9°W off-shore from the River Plate on 29 Dec'92. GHW recorded several in southern Chilean waters during Feb, including 12 in the approaches to Valparaiso on 23 Feb.

**White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus*.** Recorded by CP, who saw one in the northern Red Sea at 24.5°N 36.5°E on 6 Feb'91 and 120 adults and immatures flying east at Djibouti anchorage on 10 Aug'91.

**Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichi*.** MGW saw two in the southern Red Sea at 17.5°N 40.5°E on 25 Nov.

**Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*.** CP saw one at 21.5°N 85.7°W off Yucatan on 3 May'93, and another on 6 May at 30.4°N 78.6°W in the Atlantic, well offshore from Florida. Reports of long distance vagrancy of this North American gull continue. It has now been recorded from SE Polynesia-Pitcairn I. in March 1992. (Wragg 1994)

**Great Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*.** CP reported 30 in the Suez Canal on 4 Feb'91, and MGW tentatively identified two in winter plumage seen at 17.5°N 40.5°S in the southern Red Sea on 25 Nov.

**Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*.** MGW described five seen at entrance to East Canal Channel, Suez Canal on 29 Nov.

**Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*.** GAJ saw 60 in Barcelona Hr. on 27 Jan, 50 at Ijmuiden on 17 Feb, and ten in Oslofjord on 28 Mar. CP reported 50 at Port Said on 3 Feb'91, and MGW saw 450+ from the Suez Canal on 28 Nov'94. CP recorded small numbers off Kuwait between 30 Mar and 10 Apr'91. The species has now been recorded from the Solomon Islands. (Scofield 1994).

**Brown-hooded Gull *Larus maculipennis*.** GHW recorded 44 whilst anchored at Castro, Chiloe I. 42.5°S 73.7°W on 18 Feb, 30 at 42.8°S 73.5°W on 21 Feb, and 15 when approaching Valparaiso on 23 Feb.

**Little Gull *Larus minutus*.** Three were reported by CP from the central Mediterranean at 36.8°N 16.3°E on 30 Jan'91. GAJ reported ten in the North Sea at 56.3°N 04.9°E on 19 Feb and two at Ijmuiden on 6 Apr.

**Swallow-tailed Gull *Creagrurus furcatus*.** Two were described by GHW from 14.4°S 77°W off Peru on 3 Mar. CP recorded three at 09.2°S 80.4°W and five at 02.3°S 80.7°W on 17 and 19 Apr'93. He also saw one in the Gulf of Panama at 08.4°N 79.3°W on 20 Apr'93, which is unusual for this area. Observers should beware of confusion with the smaller Sabine's Gull which has a similar plumage pattern and migrates to the west coast of South America.

**Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*.** Various records from NW Europe. Southerly records included two seen by PWJ at 29.7°N 15.4°W north of Canaries, and one which settled on the foremast of his ship at 24.1°N 17°W off southern Morocco on

14 and 15 Feb. Heading south, CP saw the last (12) at 34.5°N 13.1°W on 10 Dec'92. MGW saw 14 in the North Pacific at 54.1°N 158°W on 14 Apr.

#### TERNs STERNINAE

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*. One was seen by CP at Djibouti anchorage on 10 Aug'91.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*. A single bird was seen at Djibouti anchorage by CP on 10 Aug'91.

South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*. Several records from the Falklands, with a maximum count of 300 at 51.4°S 59.2°E on 4 Dec'93 (AHT). It was seen northwards along the Chilean coast by GHW who found it 'numerous' at Callao, 12°S 77°W on 4 Mar.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. CP reported three at Djibouti anchorage on 10 Aug'91. SH+DH saw 17 in Roscoff Hr, on 3 Oct.

Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*. AHT saw this attractive tern at Stromness Hr. during his short visit to South Georgia, and had a maximum count of 13 on 1 Mar. CP observed one at 61.7°S 53.5°W on 24 Mar'93.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*. CP reported 35 at Djibouti anchorage on 10 Aug'91.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. PWJ reported 20 at 22°S 55.8°E near Réunion on 10 Mar. CP had a number of records in the Persian Gulf, including 90 at Kuwait anchorage on 13 Apr'91. He also recorded 50 at Djibouti anchorage on 10 Aug'91. KS reported 15 near Lembata I. Indonesia c.07.5°S 124°E on 22 Sept'93. Bridled Terns breeding in Western Australia are now known to spend the Austral winter in the NW sector of the Celebes Sea between 4° and 7° N, April to September. (Dunlop & Johnstone 1994)

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. A few records from tropical oceans, including 20 seen by PWJ in a mixed species flock at 07.1°S 04.6°W in the Atlantic on 1 Apr, seven seen by CP at 12.8°N 46.4°E in the Gulf of Aden on the 9 Aug'91 and four at 22°N 160.9°E in the Pacific by MGF on 30 Sept.

Peruvian Tern *Sterna lorata*. One was seen at 03.4°S 81.7°W off Ecuador, near the northern limit of the range by CP on 18 Apr'93.

Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*. CP saw one at 28.8°N 49.1°E in the northern Persian Gulf on 13 Jul'91.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*. CP reported two at 29.1°N 48.9°E on 24 May'91. It has been re-discovered breeding on small islands off Libya (1,740 pairs), the only known breeding place in the Mediterranean region. (Meininger *et al* 1994)

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. SH+DH saw one in Roscoff Hr. on 17 Aug and two there on 3 Oct. CP saw two at 29.1°N 49.1°E in Persian Gulf on 10 Mar'91 and three at Kuwait anchorage on 7 Apr'91. In the Caribbean he saw 15 at 22.3°N 85.3°W west of Cuba on 1 May'93.

Inca Tern *Larosterna inca*. GHW saw 'large numbers' of this ornate and striking tern at Callao on 4 Mar. 'Thousands' were roosting along the moles and on dredging pipes. They would occasionally take flight in groups of a hundred or more to feed over dredging works, or behind returning fishing boats.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*/Black Noddy *Anous minutus*. In the tropical Atlantic, a large mixed flock of both species, 2000+, was seen by CP at 03.9°S 32.4°W eight miles off Fernando de Noronha on 12 Dec'93.

White Tern *Gygis alba*. Twelve at 03.9°S 32.4°W seen by CP with the above species on 12 Dec'93.

## ALCIDS ALCIDAE

Razorbill *Alca torda*. GAJ saw two approaching the Skagerrak at 57.3°N 06.0°E on 27 Mar.

Little Auk *Alle alle*. One observed by CP at 44.4°N 08.9°W in SW Bay of Biscay on 19 Jan'91.

Brunnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*. One was seen by MGW in the NW Pacific at 54.1°N 158°W on 14 Apr'94.

Guillemot *Uria aalge*. Seen by GAJ with two at 54.4°N 01.0°E in the North Sea on 25 Mar and another two at 56.7°N 05.8°E approaching the Skagerrak on 4 May.

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*. Three reports from CP, all well off-shore from the Portugese coast, with three at 40.4°N 09.9°W on 20 Jan'91, one at 36.7°N 09.7°W the next day and one at 41.6°N 10.3°W on 9 Dec'92.

Horned Puffin *Fratercula corniculata*/Tufted Puffin *Lunda cirrhata*.

Two birds of each species were seen by MGW at 54.1°N 158°W in the NE Pacific on 14 Apr.

## Acknowledgement

I thank Dr. W.R.P. Bourne for comments on the draft.

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## LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA

Analysis by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E. Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets (numbers shown in brackets) were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials:

Petty Officer M. Cutts RN, *MV Scillonian III*, 15 Oct'94, Scillies to Penzance. (2).  
Stephen Hales & Derek Hallett, *MV Val de Loire* 27-29 Apr'94, Plymouth-Santander and return (1); 17 Aug and 3 Oct'94 - two trips Plymouth-Roscoff and return (1).  
CPO G.A. Johnson MN, *MV City of Sunderland*, 20-22 Feb, North Sea & Baltic (1); *MV Wild Lily*, 23-19 Apr'94, North Sea, Baltic (2).  
Sandy King, *STV Soren Larsen*, UK to New Zealand: 5-6 Apr'94, Panama-Tahiti (1).  
Chief Officer A.R. Louch MN, *RRS Discovery* 27 Jan-13 Feb'94 Gib-Capetown (1).  
A.H. Todd RFA, *RFA Diligence*, 4-26 Apr, Falklands (1); *RFA Fort Victoria*, 30 Sep-6 Dec'94, UK-Florida USA (via Azores)-UK (via Bermuda) (3).  
LA (Metoc) C. Patrick RN, *HMS Hecla*, 27 Jan-24 May'91, Gib-Persian Gulf (7); *HMS Endurance* 20-23 Apr'93, Panama-Cartagena, Columbia - Bay of Panama-Caribbean (4+3 BEH forms and many photos); 14 Aug'93 English Channel (1).  
CPO (Comms) G.H. Walton RFA, *RFA Gold Rover*, 23 Feb-12 Mar'94, Falklands-Valparaiso-Panama (3); *RFA Fort Austin*, 3 Oct-8 Nov'94, Adriatic, Ionian Sea, West Med (3);  
Captain M.G. Weir MN, *MV OOCL Envoy*, 10 Apr-10 May'94, Yokohama-Seattle (2); *MV OOCL Friendship*, 19 Oct-28 Nov'94, Rotterdam-Singapore-Le Havre, Med and Red Sea. (2)  
Notes were received from A.J.Pomroy of landbird observations from two cruises aboard *RRS Discovery* in the Arabian Sea Sep-Dec'94.

The number of RNBWS regular reporters continues to decline, but the quantity of records for this article is swollen by the welcome large backlog of high quality reports from Chris Patrick (CP). His records off Kuwait, in the aftermath of the Gulf War, are summarised at section H. The flow of interesting records from the Met. Office, Bracknell, extracted from Met. Logs of weather reporting ships, has been maintained; these are indicated by the notation (Met). We are greatly indebted for this valuable source, to Captain J.F.T. Houghton MN, Deputy Editor of *The Marine Observer*, and to Captain E.J.O'Sullivan MN.

### SECTION A - EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30°W), BAY OF BISCAY AND IBERLANT, ALSO IRISH SEA

1993

On 28 Oct, a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* was observed landing aboard *MV British Steel* (Met) (Captain I. Middleton) at 29.3°N 24.0°W, 350nm west of Canaries. It remained on board for six days, before departing, on arrival in port (at Ponta da Madeira, Brazil). Each day the bird was given food and water by the ships crew, as also to the "starlings chaffinches and wagtails". The heron was very shy of human presence, and would fly off when approached. It made periodic attempts to catch flying fish, but without success.

COMMENT. Grey Herons are regularly reported as "hitch-hikers" aboard ships, in many oceans of the world, especially in E. Atlantic, North Sea, Med and Indian Ocean. But in the N. Atlantic they more frequently travel west to east.

1994

On 27 Jan, ARL saw a Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* flying S, and a flock of five possible Sanderling *Calidris alba* flying NE at 35.9°N 05.8°W, in the Straits of Gibraltar. At 1915 on 31 Jan a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* roosted aboard at 15.6°N 19.7°W, 70nm NNW Cape Vert; the previous three days had been poor visibility, with dust haze. At 1230 on 1 Feb, a possible Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* was seen feeding on moths around ship at 12.1°N 17.5°W, 70nm WNW Guinea Bissau.

On 11 Apr, a Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* was found dead aboard FPV *Vigilant* (Met), in position 56.5°N 07.5°W (30nm south of Barra Head - Hebrides).

On 1 May, MV *West Moor* (Captain R. Phillips), on passage Gravesend to Ascension, reported (Met) the following birds seen on or around the vessel 0800-1200: Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* (2), Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* (2♀), "flava" wagtails (2♂ with "black eye patch and dark grey heads - probably *M.f. thunbergi*), Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (1♀), and a small group of Swallows *Hirundo rustica*.

At 0800 on 22 May, a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was sighted perched on the for'd masthead of RRS *Charles Darwin* (Captain R. Bourne) (Met), in position 49.0°N 013.7°W. It seemed exhausted and was thought to have been blown off course by NE gales from S. Ireland. There were also a number of swallows, martins, and a "warbler" aboard, but it was not seen to catch any. It remained at least an hour, but disappeared thereafter.

On 9 Oct, MV *West Moor* reported (Met): Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (2♀ + 1♂) aboard in posn. 40.6°N 011.1°W, 120nm west of Portugal, also a heron (presumed Grey Heron) flying eastwards at 0950. Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* (2) and a Turtle Dove aboard at 1000. On 14 Oct, four Turtle Doves landed aboard at 16.8°N 018.0°W, 90nm west of Senegal, chased by an unidentified "hawk". Several other "sparrow-sized" birds were also aboard until dark, but were gone next day. Two Yellow Wagtails were still aboard 15-18th.

On 15 Oct MC reported a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* flying alongside ship at 50.0°N 05.9°W, 8nm WSW Land's End, also a Goldcrest and a Skylark *Alauda arvensis* both aboard briefly.

## SECTION B - ENGLISH CHANNEL, NORTH SEA AND BALTIC

1993

On 11 Aug, CP recorded a Swift *Apus apus* flying S at 15m when 10nm south of Needles Pt. I.O.W

1994

At Ijmuiden on 17 Feb, in the approaches to Amsterdam Canal, GAJ recorded Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* (3), Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* (2), Wigeon *Anas penelope* (60+), Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (9), Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (1) and Coot *Fulica atra* (50+). 1400-1520 on 22 Feb, he recorded the following 1400-1520 at 59.6°N 010.4°E (approaches to Oslo): Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (30), Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (54), Goosander *Mergus merganser* (3 ♂ + 1 ♀), Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* (12).

GAJ recorded the following on passage Tees to Baltic: Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula* at 57.3°N 06.0°E, 55nm SW Norway on 27 Mar, and Goldeneye (2) in Oslofjord on 28th. Off Ijmuiden Locks on 7 Apr, he saw: Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (2), Shelduck (30+), Coot (50+), Tufted Duck *Aythya fuliga* (30), Eider *Somateria mollissima* (6), and four Ruddy Shelduck among geese - in previous visits he had seen only one here. A Pied Wagtail was aboard at 52.5°N 04.1°E, 35nm west of Ijmuiden on 7 Apr, also a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (♀), which flew off on approaching Tees on 8th. A Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (♂) and Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (2) were seen on 9 Apr at 56.9°N 04.9°E, central N. Sea, Ekofisk area; weather was murky with snow.

On 26 Apr, GAJ saw three Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* near Oslofjord, Norway, and a probable Merlin *Falco columbarius* aboard on 27th, in The Sound (between Denmark and Sweden); a constant stream of warblers was passing, heading north, and the falcon was waiting for these.

On passage to Santander 29 Apr, SH+DH recorded single Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, *flava* Wagtail and, just prior to arrival in Santander, a Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*. On return next day, 0600-1120 (west of Ushant to Eddystone) species seen included small groups of Turtle Doves (4+1+1+5+1+1+1 flying NW/NE), Collared Doves *S. decacoto* (2+1+2+6 aboard), Swallows (1+6+7+1 flying northerly); also several Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* and single *flava* and *alba* wagtails, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (2) and several other unidentified *phylloscopus* warblers. Winds during this period were SW/3, 3/8 cloud.

On passage Plymouth-Roscoff on 3 Aug, SH+DH recorded (0840-1150) a general southerly movement of passerines, from shortly after passing Eddystone, including: *flava* Wagtails (12+3), *alba* Wagtails (9+12), Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* (3+3+2+17+9+2), Swallow (1+15), House Martin *Delichon urbica* (1). A Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (♂) was seen aboard.

In the Baltic. On 9 Feb, GAJ saw five Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* at 59.1°N 021.6°E, 35NW Hilumas, flying E towards Estonia. On 5 Mar, MV *Storrington* (Captain W. Dempsey) reported (Met) on 5 Mar, a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* seen flying parallel to ship (Co 155°/13 kts). It made no attempt to land, and easily overtook the ship, then veered off to port, in the general direction of Russia. Ship's position: 54.6°N 18.6°E, 8nm from Hel Peninsular, Poland.

## SECTION C - WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30°)W 1993

On 5 May, CP recorded an Oven Bird *Seiurus aurocapilla* aboard for over an hour at 24.5°N 80.0°W, 40nm SE C. Sable, Florida; also an American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* aboard 10 mins. A single Swallow *Hirundo rustica* flew past heading north at 0800/6 May at 29.3°N 78.9°W, 30nm west of Andros I.

On 6 Oct, AHT saw an unidentified small wader at 35.7°N 036.7°W, 500nm SW Azores; it arrived from NE, flew around ship and departed SW. At 1150 on 8 Oct a Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* settled aboard at 33.6°N 049.2°W, 780nm east of Bermuda. Winds had been SW/4 for several days, and it was still aboard am on 8th at 32.7°N 054.6°W. At 1800 on 11 Oct a possible Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla* landed aboard at 30.1°N 070.4°W, 300nm SW Bermuda.



At 0715 on 12 Oct, a Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*, and several other unidentified small birds were aboard at 29.4°N 074.2°W, 300nm NE Cape Canaveral, Florida.

On 20 Oct, AHT saw two Great Egrets *Casmerodius albus* in flight at 24.6°N (077.6°W, and a Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina* (juv) was found exhausted on deck at 24.6°N 077.4°W, 15nm east of Andros I.

On 31 Oct, a probable Merlin *Falco columbarius* or European Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* ("dark fawn with heavy speckles") landed on the mast of MV *British Steel* (Met), when 600nm SW Cape Verde Is, (12.7°N 35.1°W). It remained aboard for four days, and was seen hunting other birds aboard, namely "starlings". It was also observed to fly away from the vessel and come back with small birds in its talons, thought to be "swallows".

**COMMENT.** Behaviour suggests Merlin more likely, and "swallows" may have been storm-petrels.

## 1994

On 3 Dec, MV *West Moor* (Captain R. Phillips) reported (Met) a white "egret" (probably a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* - yellow beak, grey legs) struggled aboard in mid-Atlantic, 3.8°N 044.0°W, 660nm NE French Guiana. It was blown off the deck three times, and finally disappeared astern. On 8 Dec, a similar egret attempted to land aboard, but failed due to strong wind eddies around vessel, in position 18.1°N 029.0W, 240nm NW C. Verde Is.

## SECTION D - GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

### 1993

On 22 Apr, CP recorded an Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum* which died after hitting upperdeck ladder at 10.4°N 77.0°W, 80nm NW Columbia. A Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca* was found exhausted and bedraggled at 10.0°N 78.2°W (40nm NE Panama) at 0900 on 23 Apr, and flew off strongly on arrival Cartagena; it took water, but declined offered insects (dead or alive).

During the night of 23/24 Apr (2130-0500), CP recorded a spectacular fall of migrants (midnight posn: 10.3°N 76.5°W, 100nm W. Cartagena, Columbia). Many small passerines were seen flying around singly or in small groups, from 2300. Numbers built up to a max. of 50 seen in the ship's lights 0200-0300, with probably many others in darkness. Last arrivals were at 0500, and numbers reduced thereafter. Species identified included:

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. (8) Three flying around 2130, later joined by others. Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea* (24). Started arriving 2130 but many more 2300-0100. 18 picked up dead after striking wires, and six exhausted were released alongside in Cartagena 1100/24th.

Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*. One found dead 0100.

Blackburnian Warbler. ♂ picked up alive at 0100 and released alongside Cartagena. (BEH + photo).

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*. (13). Most arrived 0100-0300. Nine found dead, five picked up exhausted and released Cartagena. (Photo).



Left: Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* ♂. Right: G. Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca* ♂.  
Caribbean, 23 April 1993. Photos: LA (Metoc) Chris Patrick RN.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*. Two picked up exhausted and released in port. (BEH).

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*. One found dead 0300

Dickissel *Spiza americana*. One ♂ picked up exhausted and released in Cartagena. (BEH).

The weather on 23rd was partly cloudy, with good vis, but became overcast with mist/haze around 2300. It was a dark night, with no moon. CP noted that the smaller species arrived first, with larger species (Vireos and Dickissel) arriving later.

On 30 Apr, CP saw three Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* flying north (ht. 25m) at 18.7°N 81.7°W, 210nm NE Honduras; a Swallow arrived aboard exhausted 120nm S. Cape San Antonio, Cuba, but it was found dead next morning. Further Cattle Egrets were seen: a flock of 33 flying past low N on 1 May at 22.4°N 85.6°W (40nm NW Cuba), 1+7 aboard three hours (dep N) on 3 May at 21.5°N 85.6°W (40nm W. Cuba). Swallows (2+1) were also seen flying N. A single Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (adult ♂) flew past heading NNW at 1345 on 3 May at 21.4°N 85.6°W, 50nm NNW Cuba; also a Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* came aboard at 23.2°N 84.0°W on 4 May, and remained on foc'sle at least two hrs.

On 15 Aug, an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* landed aboard MV *Orchid B* (Met) in Florida Strait (24.2°N 82.6°W - 80nm north of Cuba).

On 23 Oct, a possible King Rail, *Rallus elegans* landed aboard MV *Chiquita Nederland* (Met), at 13.2°N 76.2°W, 150nm north of Columbia, and took cover under hose pipes.

## 1994

At 2200L on 7 Feb, five possible Snowy Egrets *Egretta thula* landed aboard MV *ex-Nosac Cedar/Tarago* (Met)) at 09.5°N 56.3°W (30nm NE Guyana), and flew off to Costa Rican coast at 1200/8th.

## SECTION E - MEDITERRANEAN

1994

In the central Ionian Sea, GHW reported two Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* aboard for 2-3 days, 2-4 Oct. In the Adriatic on 15 Oct, he saw Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* ♀ and Robin *Erithica rubecula* feeding on insects aboard at 41.9°N 17.0°E, 40nm east of Italy.

On 18 Oct, MV Seki Cedar (Captain P.W. Jackson) reported (Met), a number of small migrants aboard in position 39.7°N 01.2°E, 60nm SE Spain, including: Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (5), Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* and White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. On 3 Nov, two Robins and a Black Redstart was aboard a few hours at 42.2°N 05.6°W, 60nm south of Toulon.

On 19 Oct, MGW had a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* aboard 4 hours whilst passing Gibraltar Strait, and a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (♀) which arrived aboard during thunderstorm in Malta Channel on 21st. A Skylark *Alauda arvensis* was aboard 3 hrs at 34.3°N 22.3°E, 90nm north of Ras el Hamama, Libya.

On 30 Oct, MV Moraybank (Captain A. Haynes) reported (Met) an owl sighted aboard containers in position 37.5°N 07.5°E, 23nm north of coast of Algeria. "Two middle-sized ears" suggests probably Short-eared Owl *Asio otus*. COMMENT. Both Long-eared and Short-eared Owls are frequently reported aboard ships at sea, but Short-eared seems more likely here.

GHW saw the following species at 42.7°N 06.3°E, 80nm south of Toulon on 2 Nov: two Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* (♂ and ♀) aboard at least three days, flying around ship - many small birds also aboard, but the falcons were not seen to take any; Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* (9 - one found dead), Pied Wagtail (4) and Chaffinch (10). The wind was southerly force 3. Early on 3 Nov, after a stormy night, scores of exhausted birds were found aboard, mostly small passerines, and the Kestrels were swooping up and down the side of the ship.

At 0900 on 5 Nov, GHW saw a group of five Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (one adult, five juv.) arrive from N, and circle ship closely; position was 37°6'N 19.5°E, central Ionian Sea, wind SE/3. Also on board were Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (several), Robin (3), and Chaffinch (7). Most had been on board for several days, possibly from 3rd, and were in an exhausted state.

## SECTION F - RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1991

Whilst transitting the Suez Canal southwards on 4 Feb, CP recorded Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (25), Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (1), Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* (5) Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (20), Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (8), and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (30). In the S. Red Sea on 8 Feb, he saw two Hoopoes *Upupa epops* aboard for two hours, and another in the Gulf of Aden on 9th. He also recorded "an African Collared (pink-headed) Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea*" aboard 30 mins at 12.0°N 45.0°E on 9 Feb.

1993

On 17 Aug, MV *Flinders Bay* (Captain D.K. MacCorquodale). reported (Met) a spectacular migration of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* sighted in position



28.3°N 34.2°E, at the southern end of the Gulf of Suez, course 147°T/20kts. Wind NW/6. "A long column was seen flying across the stern, at about 4 miles distance. A short while later a similar column was seen flying across the bow from port to starboard. The length of the column stretched across the horizon, several miles long. The birds were flying quite low, at about 2-3m above sea level. As the vessel passed through the column the birds made no attempt to alter course and just flew higher - the birds that had to fly over the funnel got quite a shock, however. The birds were flying on a course of about 230°T, and would have made a landfall at about the Gifatin Islands."

**COMMENT.** These birds would have been on their way from Europe (across the Bosphorus), to their wintering quarters in East Africa. This is a regular spectacle in this place, on both spring and autumn migrations, and has been reported in previous *Sea Swallows* (see 10:9, 11:6, 15:29, 17:41, 18:45, 19:44-5, 34:61 and 35:54-55). The most dramatic reported was by the late Captain Paul Harrison on 3 Aug'57 (SS 11:6) when numbers were estimated at 100,000, concentrated in huge flocks, as far as the eye could see, in both directions. Most of the birds flew only a few feet above the water, and none above 100-150ft. Another RNBWS member reported the migration still in progress the following day. I have myself seen a similar event, in the same spot, on 3 Apr'62 (SS17:41), though on that occasion the birds were flying higher, at about 200ft.

## 1994

On 23 May, a European Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* landed on the foremast of MV *Wiltshire* (Master, F.R.F. Martin) at 12.4°N 44.5°E, in the southern Red Sea (Met). It posed readily for photographs and flew off after 20 minutes, in an easterly direction, when just north of the Straits of Bab el Mandeb. It was identified from the photos as an adult ♀.

MGW recorded the following species whilst transitting the Suez Canal northwards on 28 Nov:

Curlew *Numenius arquata* - flock of 53 arr. from north and settled in Lake Timsah.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* (1 ♀) caught fish and was harried by Black-headed Gulls.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* on top of bush.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* (c.80 near Port Said).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (5 at Little Bitter Lake)

Osprey *Pandion Haliaetus* perched on post

Indian House Crows *Corvus splendens* (3+1)

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* (1 ♂) flying between trees.

Palm/Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* (1)

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (1)

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (1)

On 25 Dec, MV *Repulse Bay* (Master Captain A.J. Leslie), On passage Singapore to Southampton, reported (Met) a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* arrived aboard in position 12.4°N 44.6°E, 20nm south of Aden. It had rings on both legs and also a cord attached, which suggests this was a falconer's escapee. It caught and ate at least one "starling-sized" bird, and departed on 26th when in central Red Sea.

## SECTION G - INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1994

AJP was confident of identifications for the following: Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Little Stint *Calidris minuta* and two Short-toed Larks *Calandrella brachydactyla* on 2 Sep at 21.6°N 62.4°E, 120nm ESE Ras el Hadd, Oman. On 3 Sep, in the same area, he recorded: Common Sandpiper *Actis hypoleucos*, Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*, and a Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*.

When 40nm SE Oman, 18.9°N 58.9°E on 7 Sep, he recorded: two Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*, single Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Quail and five Little Stint. A Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* and a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* were noted at 12.0°N 64.5°E, in the central Arabian Sea, 400nm west of Laccadive Is. on 17 Sep, and a Quail at 10.4°N 65.9°E, 360nm SW Laccadive Is. on 18th.

AJP recorded a Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* on 25 Nov at 18.6°N 58.1°E, 24nm SE Ras Madraka, Oman; a Little Swift *Apus affinis* on 30 Nov at 16.1°N 62.0°E, 280nm SE Oman; and a Red-Breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* at 17.5°N 61.5°E, 230nm SE Oman.

## SECTION H - PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1991

Near Dubai (U.A.E.), CP reported two Swallows *Hirundo rustica* roosting aboard over night 23/24 Feb, and a Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe desertii* (♂) on 24th. Off Bahrain, a Hoopoe was aboard 25-26 Feb; also a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* aboard 0800-1200/26th, and a Swallow flew past heading north.

During the periods 27 Feb-29 Apr and 14-24 May, CP was operating in the area 29°N 49°E, or anchored close off Kuwait City, and identified a wide range of species including:

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*. 22-23 May - one roosted overnight, slightly oiled.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*. One flying NE 12 Apr.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*. One flew past N 23 Apr.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*. 22-23 May - one roosted overnight, slightly oiled.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*. 13 Apr, one roosting on flight deck.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*. One 26 Apr.

Teal *Anas crecca*. One ♀ found dead in thick oil 11 Mar.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*. Singles 10 Mar, 9 Apr, 3 (U) flying north 27 Mar.

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*. One 26 Apr.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*. One died 27 Apr on hitting aerial.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*. One on 27 Apr.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*. One flew past 10 Apr.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*. One flew past 27 Apr.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. Two on 9 Apr, singles 10, 11, 23 and 28 Apr.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*. One on 14 May.

Bee-checked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*. 14 aboard overnight 26-27 Apr, 11 on 14 May.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*. Four on 23 Apr, singles 13, 28, and 29 Apr.

Hoopoe. Singles on 9, 16 Mar, 11, 12 Apr.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*. Singles 10, 26 Apr.  
 Swallow. 10 Mar (1), 8 Apr (13), 12 Apr (1), 23 Apr (3), 27 Apr (1).  
 Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*. Singles 10 Mar, 27 Apr.  
 Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*. One on 29 Apr.  
 Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*. Two 11 Apr, one 12 Apr.  
 Pied Wagtail. Singles 7 and 10 Mar.  
 Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*. Twos 8,9,10,28 Apr,  
 singles 11,12,23,27 Apr, three 26 Apr.  
 Rufous Bush Robin/Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes*. Singles 10,23,26,27 Apr.  
 (Photos).  
 Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. 16 Mar (1), 10 Apr (1♂), 22 May (2♂).  
 Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*. Two 22 May.  
 Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*. 10 Mar (1♂), 16 Mar (1♀).  
 Desert Wheatear. 27 Feb (1♂), 10 Mar (1♀), 12 Mar (1).  
 Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*. One 10 Apr (photos).

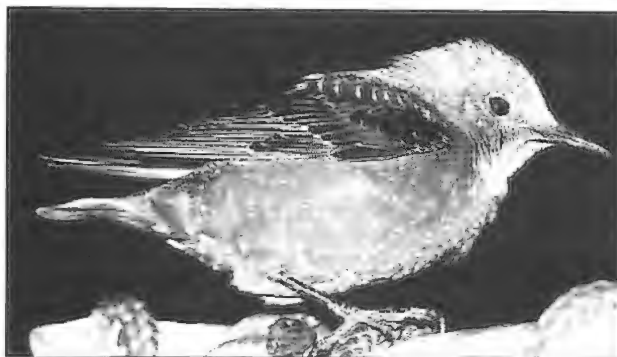


Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Persian Gulf - 10 April 1991.  
 Photos: LA (Metoc) Chris Patrick RN.

Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii*. 10 Mar (1♀).  
 Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*. (2) 27 Apr.  
 Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. Two 23 May.  
 Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. One (U) 10 Apr, 12-13 Apr (1). (Photo)  
 Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. Three 23, two 24 May, also one (U) 27 Apr.  
 Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*. One (U) 27 Apr. Singles 14,21,22,23 May.  
 Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*. One 12-13 and 27 Apr.  
 Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*. One 8 Mar, 21 May (♀).  
 Desert Lesser Whitethroat *S.c.minuta*. Three singles 12 Apr, one (U) 27 Apr.  
 Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*. One 24,26 Apr, three 27th.  
 Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*. 9 Apr (1♂), 10 Apr (1♂ 1♀)  
 Ménétries Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*. One ♂ 15 May.  
 Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*. 1-2 on 9,12,13, 23,24,26 Apr,  
 several 27 Apr, singles 22 and 23 May.  
 Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*. 1-3 on 10 Mar, 1,8,9,11 Apr, 22 May.  
 Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*. (1) 16 Mar.  
 Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicpa striata*. One 29 Apr, 14 May, two 22 May.  
 Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*. Singles 23,28 Apr, two 27th.  
 Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*. 23 Apr (1♂), 29 Apr (1♂), 14 May  
 (1♀), 22 May (3).  
 Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*. Singles 12, 26 and 27 Apr,  
 Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*. One 27 Apr.

NOTE. Uncertain identifications are indicated by (U).

NW'ly winds brought smoke from burning oil-wells ashore, causing poor visibility, especially during periods 10-11 March (NW/9) and 26-28 April (NW/15). The numerous passerines aboard during the latter period included many unidentified warblers. Numbers roosted aboard night 27/28th, feeding on flies and insects aboard, and the shrikes preyed on the warblers.



Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Persian Gulf - 9 May 1991. Photo: LA (Metoc) Chris Patrick RN.

On 9 May, when in the southern Gulf, off U.A.E. at 25.9°N 53.6°E, CP recorded Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (Photos), two Bee-eaters and a Willow Warbler aboard, and a Swallow flew past heading north.

COMMENT. These observations provide an interesting sample of the species involved in the spring migration through this area, but it is open to speculation what overall effect the smoke from the burning oil-fields had on the scale and outcome of this movement. It would be interesting to have comparable observations from this area, in other years.

### 1993

On 17 Sep, a Hoopoe was reported (Met) aboard MV Havjarl at 25.2°N 056.5°E, close off U.A.E.

## SECTION I - PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

### 1994

On 18 Feb, GHW recorded a Maguari Stork *Ciconia maguari* at 42.6°S 73.3°W, 8nm west of Chiloe I. It flew towards mainland Chile. On 23 Feb a Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus* landed aboard at 33.0°S 71.6°W, 10nm west of Valparaiso. It remained 30mins before flying off towards land.

On passage through the Panama Canal on 12 Mar, GHW recorded: Black Vulture *Coragypa atratus* (100s), Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* (6), Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (4), Cooi Heron *Ardea cooi* (1), Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (4), Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (8), Boat-tailed Grackle *Cassidix mexicanus* (50+), Forked-tail Flycatcher *Muscivora tyrannus* (1), Great Kiskadee (1), Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (1), Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* (50+).

On 5 Apr, SK recorded a probable Cattle Egret aboard 1200-1830, when close off Costa Rica, 7.0°N 80.4°W. Two probable Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were seen flying NW at 1800, when 30nm off coast, and further singles on 6th, and 7th, at 6.0°N



083.4°W, and another on 24 Apr at 1.8°S 089.6°W, 20nm south of Galapagos.

On 5 May, MV Cavendish (Captain J.O. Jubb), on passage from Panama to Singapore reported (Met) that, shortly after clearing the Panama Canal, while steaming westwards along the coast of Costa Rica, a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* landed aboard at 8°N 88°W. It remained for three days, leaving am. on 8th, having travelled 1,200 miles. It was initially rather shy, and spent an hour inspecting strips of red meat laid out for it, but finally overcame its nervousness and ate the meat. On 6th and 7th, it frequently flew off, returning with a small seabird in its claws, which it quickly devoured, so the offer of meat was discontinued.

From photographs taken aboard MV *Welsh Venture* (Captain M.C. Roberts), on passage from Persian Gulf to Kawasaki, a bird which arrived aboard on 3 May, off O Shima Island (Japan), was identified as a Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*.

On 19 May, four House Crows *Corvus splendens* arrived aboard MV Tarago (Met) in position 8.6°N 109.2°E, 120nm SE Thailand, and remained until 22nd when 30nm off Hong Kong - a distance of over 1,000nm.

On 26 May, MV Newport Bay (Captain J.A. Oscroft), on passage Jeddah to Port Kelang, reported (Met) a bird sighted resting on the ship in position 7.4°N 75.3°E, 125nm east of Maldive Is. From the excellent coloured sketch given this was almost certainly a Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*.

Whilst berthed at Vanterm (Vancouver) on 10 Apr, MGW recorded Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* (23), Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* (8), White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi* (3), Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* (2), American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22), Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* (200+), a probable Buffelhead *Bucephala albeola* (♀), and Northwest Crows *Corvus caurinus* (3).

At 0620z on 27 May, MGW recorded a Cattle Egret aboard at 42.4°N 155.6°E, 340nm SE Kurile Is. It was in full breeding plumage, and remained at least 3 hours until after sunset, but was not seen next day - (ship's course was 060°/20.5kts). At 0600z on 10 May, a Rock Sandpiper *Calidris pilocnemis* was aboard at 49.4°N 169.5°W, 180nm SE Kurile Is. It was in summer plumage, remained for 50 mins, and departed NE.

On 24 Oct, a "small owl with very large extremely prominent ears" was reported (Met) aboard MV. *Latia* "MSBL9" (Captain G.P. Donnelly) in the central Bay of Bengal, 6.0°N 089.3°E, 250nm SW Nicobar Is. This may have been a Short-eared Owl *Asio otus*. On 25 Oct, a "hawk" was observed aboard at 6.1°N 092.6°E, Bay of Bengal, 100nm WSW Nicobar Is. It was seen again on 28th. From description given this was possibly a Chinese Goshawk *Accipiter soloensis*.

## SECTION J - SOUTH ATLANTIC

1994

Whilst alongside in Mare Harbour, East Falkland, AHT recorded a Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* perched aboard near gangway on 4 Apr, and two Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* on the jetty on 10th.

Three Dark-faced Tyrants *Muscisaxicola macloviana* were aboard whilst at anchor in Fox Bay, West Falkland, on 24 Apr, and during a brief walk ashore there he saw the following in the immediate vicinity of the jetty: White-tufted Grebe *Rollandia roland* (7), Striated Caracara *Phalacrocorax australis* (5), Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* (6) and Red-backed Hawk *Buteo polyosoma* (2).

Two Cattle Egrets were seen on 26th. when 7nm SSE Bleaker Island, flying astern of ship attempting to land aboard, but were unable to catch up in the strong winds.

M.B.C.

## THE BIRDS OF MOTLEY ISLAND, FALKLAND ISLANDS -

### A 1995 Survey Report

by R. Porter, R.W. Woods, C.C. Peach and E.G. Bloomfield.

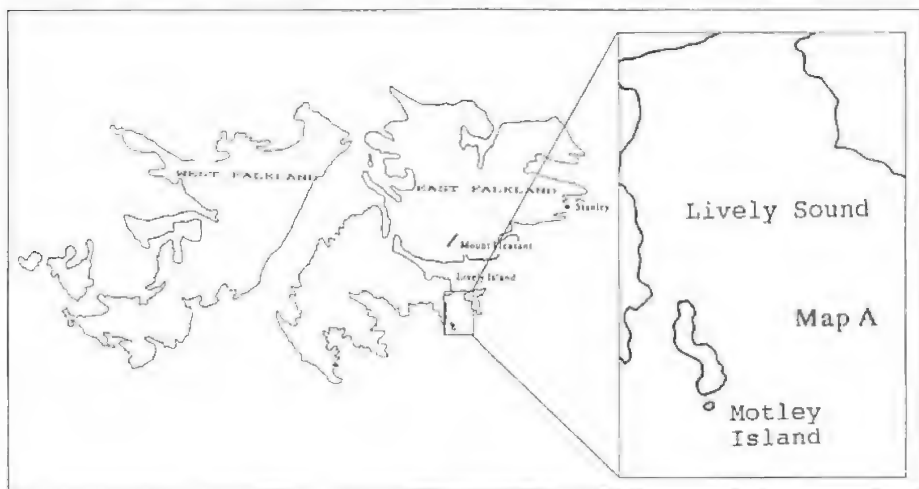
#### Introduction.

Motley and several other small islands near Lively Island in South East Falkland were purchased by Falklands Conservation in October 1994 as potential nature reserves. At the same time, an "External Training Activity" for Young Officers under training at the Britannia Royal Naval College was in the planning stage and the Falkland Islands was to be their destination. So an approach was made to Robin Woods (author of *Guide to Birds of the Falkland Islands*) for advice, and in collaboration with John Croxall, Chair of Falklands Conservation, Motley Island was chosen as a base for the Activity and permission granted for the party to land and camp on Motley. The party comprised Mr E.G.B. Bloomfield (leader), Dr. R. Porter (geologist), Commander C. Peach RN (ornithologist), Mr R. Woods (scientific adviser), Midshipmen W. Crookes (camp-site organiser), J. Livesey (cine-photographer), T. Shaughnessy (expedition gear), S. Studley (scientific records), S. Swailes (report writer) and Sub-Lieut M. Parr (stores and equipment).

The aim of the expedition was to conduct a baseline ecological survey, with Robin Woods accompanying the group as scientific adviser. The survey carried out from 5-9th January 1995 shows what excellent results are possible when Falklands Conservation and military personnel co-operate in field work. It is interesting that there have been three recent reports in *Sea Swallow* from this SE side of the Falklands (Fitzpatrick 1992, Todd 1994 and Winter 1991).

#### Motley Island.

Motley lies approximately 35km. to the SSW of Mount Pleasant in Lively Sound between Lively Island and the East Falkland mainland (see Map A). It is approximately 4km. long and up to 1km. wide with an area around 815 acres (330ha). The Island is uninhabited but was used for fattening sheep for the Stanley butchery, until about three years ago. Little is known about the history of the

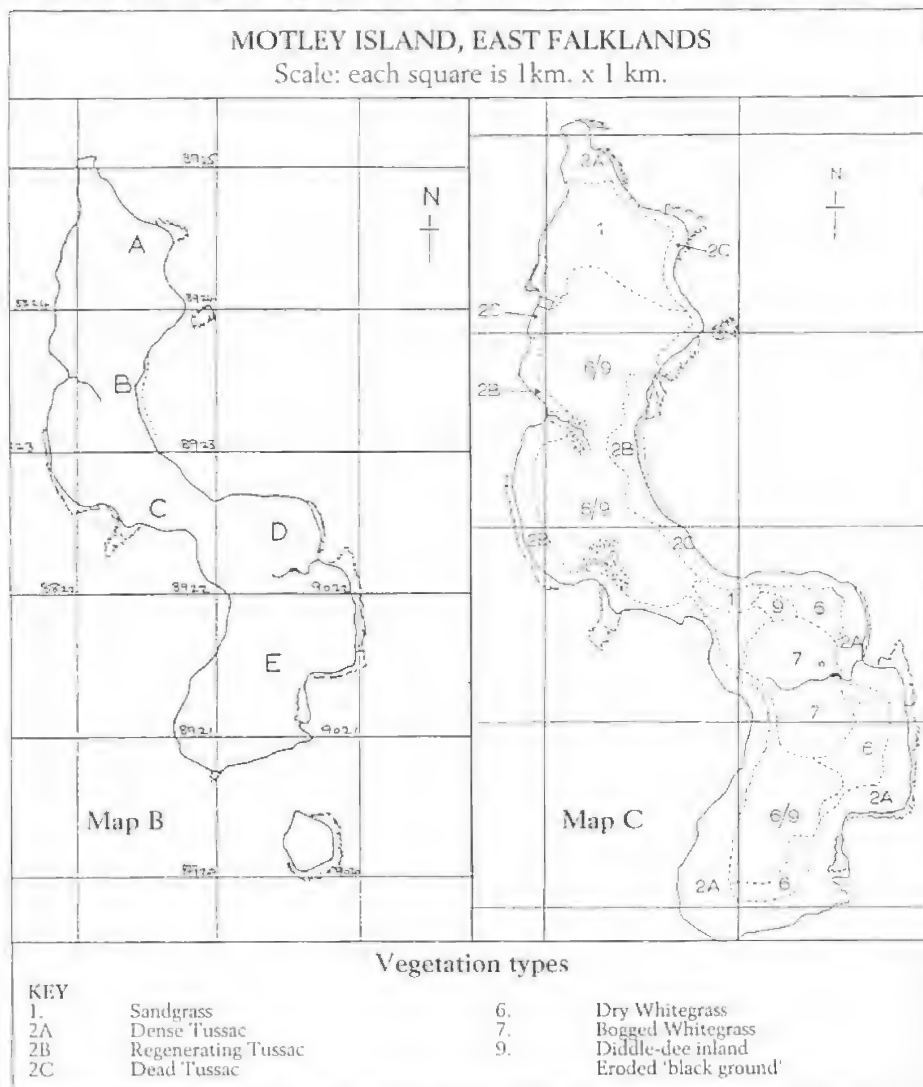


island but the Danish barque *Maren* was run ashore 'on Motley Island' on 3rd October 1894, after developing a bad leak; on 19th October she drifted out to sea and was never seen again (Southby-Tailyour 1985). The fate of her crew is not known, and if no rats or mice escaped from the wreck then Motley should provide a safe haven for the native bird species.

The Island is largely low lying and flat being mostly less than 16 metres in altitude. There are sea cliffs of less than 10 metres with horizontal rocky foreshores. There are two areas of sand dunes, one in the north and one on the east coast, the former probably a result of overgrazing and wind erosion in the past.

### The Fieldwork Aims.

Motley is contained in 12 x 1km. grid squares, of which five have substantial amounts of land (see Map B). These squares formed the basis for the survey.



Regarding the birds, the aim was to record all species on the Island; to confirm breeding for as many species as possible; to look for and identify any petrels/shearwaters that may be breeding; and to obtain some quantitative information on some species. This was done using Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) record forms to list all species seen or heard with the level of evidence entered as obtained. The party was extremely fortunate to have Robin Woods as one of their number; his expertise was invaluable in quickly teaching the rest of the group how to identify the different species by sight and by call. Without his help the party would still have been arguing over the correct identification of the first half dozen species on the plane home.

The party also surveyed the vegetation and produced a vegetational map (see Map C). A geological survey was also conducted and a geological map produced. It appears likely that this was the first geological ground survey of Motley Island and the first time that it had been visited by a geologist.

The terrestrial invertebrates of the Island were also sampled by several lines of pitfall traps.

The camping equipment was provided by Mount Pleasant Airbase (MPA) and the party was transported to Motley by a Chinook from 78 Squadron. Motley was new to all of the party so the helicopter circled the Island at a height of 500ft. followed by a second circle at 50ft. This allowed the Island to be photographed from the air and a suitable camp site to be selected. A site near the pond was chosen so that the party could be near a water supply but the water proved to be muddy and peaty so the party had to rely on the freshwater that they had taken with them. The aerial photographs later proved to be invaluable in the compilation of the vegetational and geological maps.

## THE BIRDS OF MOTLEY ISLAND.

A total of 38 species were recorded on or near Motley Island. Of these, 24 were confirmed as breeding, five possibly breeding, and nine species only recorded as present. The following list of birds, recorded on or over Motley Island, follows the order in Woods (1988).

**KEY** as used on the Breeding Birds Survey (BBS) form:-

Column 1 shows evidence that a species was probably breeding:

S = singing male,

D = display seen,

T = bird holding territory

Column 2 contains evidence of confirmed breeding:

FL = recently fledged young,

NE = nest with eggs,

NY = nest with young or downy young seen,

FY = adult with food for young.

Column N gives a rough estimate of the population, based on only four days preliminary work. This is in pairs except where indicated.



Species	1	2	N	Notes
Magellanic Penguin		NY	c1000	All coasts and in tussac
Black-browed Albatross				Few offshore
Southern Giant Petrel				Singles offshore
Fairy Prion				2 wings found
Sooty Shearwater	S			1 heard (D)
Common Diving Petrel				2 wings found (E)
Rock Shag		NY	c70	6 colonies (A,B,C,D & E)
King Shag		NY	c75	2 colonies (D & E)
Black-crowned Night Heron		NE	c25	Scattered all coasts
Ruddy-headed Goose		FL	2	Coastal (C & D)
Upland Goose		FL	c100	Widespread
Kelp Goose		FL	c100	All coasts
Crested Duck		FL	50	All coasts; pond (D)
Flightless Steamer Duck		FL	c250	All coasts
Speckled Teal		FL	c4	2prs+4juvs pond (D)
Turkey Vulture			c15	no juvs/nests (E)
Crested Caracara	D		1-3	Pairs calling (C)
Peregrine Falcon			1 ♂	W coast cliff (B)
Blackish Oystercatcher		NE	c50	All coasts
Magellanic Oystercatcher		NE	c75	All coasts
Rufous-chested Dotterel	T		1/2	Heathland (C)
Magellan Snipe	S		c30	Marram; heathland
Snowy Sheathbill				2 birds
Antarctic Skua		NY	c50	On higher ground
Dolphin Gull			2ads.	SE of island by Sea Lions
Kelp Gull		NY	10-15	W Coast (B & C)
Brown-hooded Gull			1 bird	Offshore (D)
South American Tern		NY	c10	W and N coasts
Short-eared Owl	T		c2	Near camp (D)
Tussacbird		FL	c250	All coasts, tussac
Dark-faced Ground-tyrant		FL	20	Coasts with rock shelves
Falkland Pipit		FY	1	Diddle-dee ridge in 'D'
Grass Wren		FY	c10	Marram & tussac
Cobb's Wren		FL	c200	All coasts with tussac
Falkland Thrush		FL	c150	Coasts and in tussac
Black-chinned Siskin		FL	c30	Tussac; marram; sorrel
Black-throated Finch		FL	c50	Inland, tussac and coasts
Long-tailed Meadowlark		FL	c10	Inland and coasts

#### NOTES ON THE BIRD SPECIES.

**Magellanic Penguin** *Spheniscus magellanicus*. This penguin was in evidence almost continuously, and could be heard calling in most parts of the island at most times of the day and night. The call is similar to the braying of a donkey, hence it is known by the Falkland Islanders as the 'Jackass Penguin'. A dawn chorus was noticed around 0200 with a resurgence of calling in the evenings. It nests in burrows beneath the clumps of tussac grass. No other species of penguin was detected on or near the Island.

**Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophris* and **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus*. Individuals of both these species were seen near the coasts but no records of breeding.

Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*, Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* and Common Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*. None of these species were seen. However, two wings of fairly long dead prions were collected and subsequently identified at the Natural History Museum at Tring as probably being Fairy Prion. Two Common Diving-petrel wings were also found and the Natural History Museum subsequently confirmed the identification. It is likely that these wings from both species are the remains of Short-eared Owl prey, and that the Common Diving-petrel is probably breeding. No Sooty Shearwaters were seen but one was heard calling at night; since these birds usually only call over their breeding grounds, it is likely that they are breeding on the island.

Rock Shag *Phalacrocorax magellanicus* and King Shag *Phalacrocorax atriceps albiventer*. Both these species were seen on the coasts.



King Shag *Phalacrocorax atriceps albiventer* Motley Island, East Falklands - January 1995.

Photo: Commander C.C. Peach RN.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax n. cyanocephalus*. Single birds were seen around the coasts, and a nest with broken eggshells was found on the east coast.

Ruddy-headed Goose *Chloephaga rubidiceps*, Upland Goose *C. picta leucoptera* and Kelp Goose *C. hybrida malvinarum*. Only two pairs of Ruddy-headed Geese were seen; but pairs and family parties of Upland Geese were frequently seen inland. Nests were found with up to six eggs, while some pairs had large flightless juveniles. In the sand dunes on the east of the island there were many bird bones and these appear to be of geese. It is possible that they are the remains of geese killed for bounty payments, which was once a common practice in the Falklands, as they were seen as competitors for the grass that the sheep grazed upon. Kelp Geese were present on all rocky coasts and several family groups were noted with up to five goslings.

Crested Duck *Lophonetta specularioides*. This duck was seen on all coasts and on the pond, in pairs and family groups.

Falkland Flightless Steamer Duck *Tachyeres brachydactyla*. These ducks were conspicuous on all coasts, often in pairs and occasionally with fairly well grown ducklings. Flocks of 30 or more birds were seen offshore, probably immature non-breeders and one pair was observed mating.

Speckled Teal *Anas flavirostris*. Up to two pairs were seen on the pond and they often called when we approached.



Blackish Oystercatcher *Haematopus ater* Motley Island, East Falklands - January 1995.

Photo: Commander C.C. Peach RN.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*, Crested Caracara *Caracara plancus* and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus cassini*. There was only one sighting of a single Peregrine Falcon but up to three pairs of Crested Caracara were present. Two adults were seen calling and displaying from the sand dunes and on another occasion up to six were seen calling. Single birds and small loose groups of Turkey Vultures were observed. No evidence of breeding was seen, but it is likely that they were nesting in the dense tussac around the southern end of the island. Three pellets consisting almost entirely of sheeps' wool were found.

Blackish Oystercatcher *Haematopus ater* and Magellanic Oystercatcher *H. leucopodus*. Both species were seen on the rocky and sandy shores and nests with eggs and young of the Blackish Oystercatcher.

Rufous-chested Dotterel *Charadrius modestus*. A pair was seen probably in breeding territory, but no juveniles were seen.

Magellan Snipe *Gallinago magellanica magellanica*. Pairs and single birds were seen and heard in the whitegrass and dunes of the island. The tameness of some individuals was remarkable; one bird disturbed away from cover between marram grass plants simply stood and looked at the two observers less than two metres away for a couple of minutes before walking quietly away. Other adults called loudly and repetitively from the ground, possibly because observers were near small chicks.

Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis alba*. Two birds were seen foraging on the foreshore, and a few loitering in the King Shag colony.

Antarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica*. Pairs of these conspicuous brown birds were found on all higher and drier ground on the Island. Several nests with two eggs or very small chicks were found and tape recordings of the calls of three pairs nesting within 30m. of each other were made. Their habit of dive-bombing intruders, but not actually making contact, was shown by some birds; others appeared very half-hearted about attacking and one sitting bird was so reluctant to leave the nest that it sat tight, calling loudly while its neck-feathers were stroked. This occurrence highlights the fearless nature of many Falkland species that will often come to observe the human watcher, if they remain still for a short while. Single birds were seen near Rock Shag colonies, probably waiting for opportunities to make piratical attacks.

Dolphin Gull *Larus scoresbii*, Kelp Gull *L. dominicanus* and Brown-hooded Gull *L. maculipennis*. All three of these gulls were only seen in small numbers. There was no evidence of either the Dolphin or Brown-hooded breeding but at least one Kelp Gull nest was found, with one dead and one live chick.

South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*. Several birds were seen offshore and one nest found just above the high water mark on the west coast; a few feet away a small chick was found hiding with its head out of sight between boulders.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus sanfordi*. This is the southern hemisphere sub-species and indistinguishable in the field from the north European variety. Three were seen in flight during the helicopter survey of the island and two visited the camp site on the first evening, apparently curious and wanting to see for themselves who was on their territory. One pellet was found that contained many feathers, probably of a diving-petrel, the main-wing bones a diving-petrel and the elytra of a large weevil.

Tussacbird *Cinclodes antarcticus antarcticus*. Conspicuous and present in large numbers often displaying the fearless and inquisitive nature of these birds. Adults often had bleached, broken or partly moulted wing and body feathers whereas fledged juveniles were attractive in their clean plumage. No adults were heard singing or seen taking food to nests suggesting that the height of the breeding season had passed and that the population was probably at its highest with many fledged juveniles. The estimated population was 250 pairs.

Dark-faced Ground Tyrant *Muscisaxicola macloviana macloviana*. Seen in all sections, these birds often perched on the tents of the campsite. The habit of landing on the highest available perch is reminiscent of the Wheatear.

Falkland Pipit *Anthus correndera*. Only one pair was sighted. They were feeding young birds in the nest.

Grass Wren *Cistothorus platensis falklandicus* and Cobb's Wren *Troglodytes (aeson) cobbi*. A few Grass Wrens were seen including one with food for young but it was the Cobb's Wren that was numerous and conspicuous. Like the Tussacbird, these birds are fearless and inquisitive and will come within a few centimetres of a sitting observer. It was apparent from the worn plumage of many of the adult Cobb's Wrens that they were entering a moult stage after the main breeding season.

Falkland Thrush *Turdus f. falklandii*. Another fearless and inquisitive bird often found in the tussac grass and foraging in the dead kelp, accumulated on the shores.



Black-chinned Siskin *Carduelis barbartus*. Pairs and small family groups often recorded in the dense tussac or feeding on sheep's sorrel seeds on the ground.

Black-throated Finch *Melanodera m. melanodera*. Family parties recorded from all parts of the island particularly in the marram grass in the sand dunes and in the sheep's sorrel along the inner (landward) edge of the tussac grass. All males appeared in good plumage. Some were still singing and it seemed likely that further breeding attempts could be made in the season.

Long-tailed Meadowlark *Sturnella loyca falklandica*. Single males, pairs and small family groups up to approx. six were recorded. Juveniles were being fed by adults and one fledged juvenile was found dead but there was no evidence of nest building and, as with most passerines, it seemed that the breeding season had almost ended.

### ORNITHOLOGICAL SUMMARY.

These records confirm the importance of Motley Island as a potential nature reserve. The abundance of Tussacbirds, Cobb's Wrens and Falkland Thrushes can be taken as an indication that the Island is free of introduced mammalian predators, such as rats and mice. One of the aims of the expedition was to prove the absence of rats and mice. It was also pleasing to note that the Black-chinned Siskin population was apparently successful on the Island, lacking introduced trees or shrubs, but with a substantial fringe of mature tussac, which would have provided potential nest sites at around 2m. above ground level. The snipe population also appeared to be high, and both species of oystercatchers were present in good numbers. Lack of time, and unfamiliarity with the island's topography, prevented a proper investigation for burrowing shearwaters and petrels, but some evidence for the presence of Common Diving-petrel and Sooty Shearwater was obtained. The population of Magellanic Penguins seemed healthy and no dead or dying birds were seen; juveniles were evident in all parts of the tussac, where these birds burrowed. The elongated S-shape of Motley Island causes it to have a much longer coastline than if it was more rectangular. These coastal areas vary from steep boulder beaches or low shallow sand beaches to rocky shelves below the cliffs, thus providing a variety of habitats for coastal birds. The occurrence and confirmed breeding of all native Falkland Island passerine species on Motley Island is further evidence of the Island's value for conservation as a nature reserve.

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# BIRDS OBSERVED AT SEA DURING THE VOYAGE OF HMS *BLONDE* TO HAWAII (1824-1826)

By Storrs L. Olson.

It seems appropriate to put on record here some reports of birds observed at sea aboard a vessel of the Royal Navy that have remained unpublished for almost a century and three-quarters. In 1824 the 46-gun frigate *Blonde* departed England on a diplomatic mission to the Hawaiian Islands, under the command of George Anson, Lord Byron, who had succeeded to that title only a few months previously, upon the death of his cousin, the renowned poet.

The *Blonde* crossed the Atlantic to Brazil by way of Madeira, sailed round Cape Horn, stopping in Chile, Peru, and the Galapagos, before arriving in Hawaii. She returned in 1826 via Malden Island, Mauke (in the Cook group), Chile, and St. Helena. Aboard was a youthful and largely untrained naturalist, Andrew Bloxam, who prepared specimens and kept natural history notes during the voyage. Apart from a few observations incidentally included in a volume that appeared under Byron's name (Byron 1827) that was cobbled together by a compiler from several diaries, virtually nothing was published on the natural history of the voyage until I began my studies of Bloxam's manuscript natural history notes, which are housed at the British Museum (Natural History) (Olson 1986, in press a,b). These notes contain several references to landbirds observed at sea, as well as seabirds.

There are several transcriptions of Bloxam's notes. The passages that follow are from a fair copy, with additional or variant information from rougher notes inserted in brackets [ ]. I have standardised the dates and coordinates, which do not appear in the same format as in the original notes.

## LANDBIRDS

### Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

11 Oct 1824. 48°33'N 07°50'W [Bay of Biscay] A pyefinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) was caught on deck this morning probably driven from land by the tempestuous weather. It is a native of England and not a bird of passage. Several snipes & petrels [Mother Cary's chickens] (*Procellaria Pelagica*) were observed in the course of the day.

I assume from the Latin name that this can only refer to the Chaffinch, although I have been unable to find "Pyefinch", even as a provincial name for this species, in such standard sources as Montagu (1831) or Newton (1896).

### Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

13 Oct 1824. 45°04'N 10°10'W [Bay of Biscay]. A Skylark was caught on deck today [this morning] (*Alauda arvensis*). It soon after died of overfatigue. [We fed it & kept it alive for some time. It died after a few days.]

### Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and owl (*Strigiformes* sp. indet.)

14 Oct 1824. 44°01'N 11°19'W. A Goldfinch (*Fringilla carduelis*) was caught this morning on deck [ & soon died from fatigue]. A small white owl was also observed flying about but unwilling to settle. Our nearest distance from land C[ape] Finisterre about 120 miles.

### Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and "martins" (*Hirundinidae* spp. indet.)

29 Oct 1824. 23°11'N 23°13'W. [Calm]. A flock of swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) flew and settled about the ship to day. [A single swallow settled, in evening several more appeared going to southward.]. The stormy petrel was also seen.

31 Oct 1824. 19°54'N 25°00'W. A large flock of swallows & martins settled about the ship to day & accompanied us for several days. Many were caught by the hands of the sailors as they flew close to us upon the deck for the purpose of taking flies.

### Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

31 Oct 1824. 19°54'N 25°00'W. A hen redstart (*Motacilla phoenicurus*) was observed about the ship to day. It continued with us several days & used to come into the ports of the after gun room to be fed night-morning. We suddenly missed it [one day], probably one of the cats on board had seized it at roost.

### Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

4 Nov 1824. 11°10'N 25°37'W. The spotted gallinule *Rallus porzana*, a bird rare in England, was caught on deck to day [& given to Lady B(yron)] [Length 8 1/2 inch, breadth 12 1/2 i.]

### Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

7 Nov 1824. 08°02'N 24°40'W. A beautiful female Kestrel Hawk (*Falco tinnunculus*) was caught in the rigging to day & preserved alive [some time] in a cage. It is remarkable that all the land birds hitherto seen [caught on board] are natives [inhabitants] of England.

### Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*

23 Nov 1824 22°46'S 37°42'W. A beautiful land bird settled on the ship today [flew on board when off C. Frio] which answered in every respect to the *Corvus Dubius* of Linnaeus, which is an inhabitant of the neighbouring coast of Brazil. It was about the size of a thrush. The back, tail & upper parts of a reddish [rusty] brown color, breast belly & under parts yellow. The crown of head black, from the base of the bill two broad white lines pass thro' the orbits and meet on the hind head. Bill & legs black. Its flight like that of a woodpecker. It was shot at [we shot at it] but unfortunately [it] fell overboard [into the sea & we were unable to pursue it]. [330 miles from Rio].

Bloxam's detailed description could seemingly apply only to the Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*, a common and conspicuous flycatcher throughout most of the Neotropical lowlands. At first consideration, the appearance of a Neotropical subspecies at sea at a point well over 200 miles from the nearest land would seem exceptional, which it may be. But the Great Kiskadee migrates out of the southern parts of its range (Sick 1993) and has been known to wander to Chile and the Falklands (Ridgely and Tudor 1994), so the occasional individual might be expected to stray far out to sea from time to time.

Bloxam's notes raise something of a nomenclatural conundrum: what is the identity of *Corvus dubius*? Bloxam's only source of bird names was Turton's (1800) translation of the 13th edition of Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*, which was compiled by Gmelin (1788-9). The *Corvus dubius* of Gmelin (1788:369) is based on a description by Jacquin (1784) of a bird from Cartagena, Colombia. Bloxam's description of the bird he observed at sea reads almost like a direct translation of Gmelin's Latin description, so I think that there can be little doubt that both refer to the Great Kiskadee. But the name *Corvus dubius* Gmelin seems simply to have disappeared from the ornithological literature without a trace or an explanation. It is difficult to believe that for the past 200 years compilers could have overlooked a Gmelin name and failed to dispose of it, but I could not find *Corvus dubius* listed as a synonym in any of the passerine volumes of the *Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum*, nor did I find it in other sources with good lists of synonyms, such as Hellmayr (1927). This is highly curious, but of no nomenclatural consequence. If both names refer to the Great Kiskadee, then *Corvus dubius* Gmelin (1788) is simply a junior synonym of *Lanius sulphuratus* Linnaeus (1766).

### Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis*

30 Dec 1825. This morning a land bird was caught on deck. Upon examination I found it to be the *Fringilla Australis*, which is found in Tierra del Fuego & also the whole of Chili. We were at the time it flew on board exactly 37 miles south of Staten land, with a northerly breeze.

*Fringilla australis* is a synonym of *Zonotrichia capensis*, the Rufous-collared Sparrow, one of the most widely distributed of Neotropical birds and a common inhabitant of southern South America.

### **Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis alba***

31 Dec 1825. 2 white birds were seen early this morning around the ship, & from their description were evidently the Sheathbill. We were about 100 miles SE of the Falkland islands in about [latitude and longitude left blank]. They were described as being about the size of a Pidgeon, white, with short wings, & red legs, the latter not palmed.

### **Hummingbird (Trochilidae sp. indet.)**

28 Sept 1825. Humming bird 10 miles from land.

This observation was mentioned in a short summary list of land bird sightings that included many of the preceding records, but I did not find this hummingbird mentioned anywhere else in Bloxam's notes. On this date the *Blonde* must have been near Concepcion, Chile, where the ship anchored the following day.

## **SEABIRDS**

The following are most of Bloxam's observations of pelagic birds, except those associated with particular islands or ports. These notes have little other than historical interest, but in places they invoke an appreciation of the superb oceanic adaptations of procellariiform birds that will certainly be shared among readers of this journal.

Unfortunately, few of the seabirds that Bloxam collected were prepared as specimens, and of those only a few terns appear to have survived (Olson, in press a). Had he been more diligent in this regard, and had his collections been properly studied, additional birds new to science would have been credited to the voyage of the *Blonde*, as Bloxam's notes indicate that he handled several species of seabirds that had not at the time been described.

### **Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus***

Nov 1824. Procellaria Pelagica

Caught on the line

Length 6 1/2 Inch, breadth 15 D[itt]o. Length from knee joint to middle toe 2 1/2 Inch. Foot one inch long, no spur behind. The webs beautiful orange color surrounded with black. Legs stick out an inch beyond the tail. Larger species than one caught nr the Galapagos.

By "caught on the line" I assume Bloxam was referring to the Equator, which the *Blonde* first crossed on 12 November 1824 rather than the method of capture. The "knee joint" must refer to the intertarsal joint; the long tarsus in combination with the rest of the description indicate that the species must have been *Oceanites oceanicus*, which had been described only four years previously and would have been unknown to Bloxam.

### **Galapagos Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma* sp.**

Stormy Petrel. Taken nr the Galapagos March 1825. Length 7 inches. Breadth 13 l. No back spur. Webs black. Color dusky black, tail coverts white.

The dark webs and lack of white on the belly eliminates *Oceanites gracilis*. This might be any one of the three *Oceanodromas* occurring in this area - the Galapagos, Madeiran or Leach's Storm-petrel *O. tethys*, *O. castro* or *O. leucorhoa*.



## White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria* (?)

Procellaria pelagica

A variety in the So seas--in Lat. 35°S, Long 81°W. Same size as the common P. P. & has tail coverts white, with the under plumage white also.

Although this description might apply to various storm-petrels, at the coordinates given, near Juan Fernandez, *F. grallaria* would probably be the most likely. Bloxam included all storm-petrels under the name *Procellaria pelagica*, although he clearly recognized that more than one kind was involved. Thus, if we allow that the storm-petrels Bloxam saw off the Bay of Biscay actually were *Hydrobates pelagicus*, then he appears to have encountered at least four species of storm-petrels during the voyage.

## Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*

13 Jan 1825. 53°19'S 63°16'W. Being now between the Falkland islands & main coast of America we saw a great variety [quantities] of sea birds [of different species]. Several of the petrel species, a small black duck the size of a widgeon & the Wandering Albatross for the first time (*Diomedea exulans*). As we now saw these constantly on our passage round Cape Horn, I had an opportunity of observing them accurately. They are seldom met with so far to the North as the tropics. We observed them in far greater numbers to the Westward of Cape Horn than to the Eastward. They are seldom taken except when ships are obliged to lay to in a storm or in a calm when they swim under the stern of the vessel and will greedily take a hook baited with a piece of pork or meat. It is difficult to bring them down with shot, as from their immense size & thickness of feather, it has but little effect upon them. They are always slow in taking their food and invariably settle in the water for the purpose, from which owing to their immense extent of wing they are sometime in rising. Their flight resembles very much that of Birds of Prey, scarcely ever flapping their wings but skimming slowly & majestically immediately over the wake, sometimes in a direct line, sometimes wheeling to the right or left, approaching without fear within a few yards of the ship. Their wings are very long but narrow & project nearly at right angles from their body when extended. Their tail is short. The extent of the wings of most of them appeared to be nine or ten feet, tho' some must be at least fourteen & instances have been known where they have been eighteen feet from tip to tip. They seem to have as great a variety of color as the common [brown] gull. Their heads however are almost invariably of a dull white, which is the case also with their belly & under parts of their wing. The following were the colors of several varieties that I observed---age probably causes it.

- No. 1. The upper surface of back, wings, & tail of dark brown; the under parts white.
- No. 2. The upper surface of the wings & tail brown, back white.
- No. 3. The whole dull [pure] white color.
- No. 4. The upper surface of wings alone brown, all the rest a dirty [snow] white.

So great is the variety of color, that scarcely two in a whole flock resemble each other. The most beautiful were those which were purely white [of a pure snowy whiteness]. These however were rare & seldom met with. We met with them in the greatest abundance about the same latitude and [much more to the No] on the Pacific side of C. Horn. We saw several on the day we entered Valparaiso, but did not see any more to the No excepting a flock of five in [seen going out of] Callao Roads in So Lat. 12° 3'. We were unsuccessful in procuring any on our way round the Cape.

24 Jan 1825. 54°50'S 80°55'W. We saw great quantities of these birds to day. *Diomedea exulans* or the Wandering Albatross---Guns & rifles were in requisition to fire at them as they came close to the vessel sometimes flying over it but generally over the quarters tho' we fired at them above 50 times only one was fairly brought down & that by myself with swan shot about 20 yards distant. Shot seems scarcely to have any effect upon them. As we were going at the rate of 7 knots we were unable to lower a boat to procure it.

Although Bloxam probably included all the albatrosses he saw under the name *D. exulans*, those described above correspond very well to various plumage stages of that species, which are due, as Bloxam rightly assumed, to differences in age. That various crew of the *Blonde*, including Bloxam, made sport of shooting at these birds shows that even a quarter century after the appearance of the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, superstitions regarding the

killing of albatrosses were not prevalent in the Royal Navy. Certainly no ill fortune befell the *Blonde*, which had fair weather throughout the entire voyage, nor did Bloxam suffer in the least from having slain an albatross, for he returned safely to England and lived a peaceful life as a country parson for another 52 years.

### **Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris***

A small albatross was shot to day [31 December 1825]. Extent of wing 7 feet 1 inch. Breadth of wing 6-7 inches. Length 3 feet. Color: upper surface of wings, the back & extremity of tail black, head neck tail coverts breast & belly pure white, a small dusky bar over the eye. Legs light olive color, palmated, only 3 toes, no hind spur. Bill light yellow, exactly resembling that of the albatross. Tongue short, nostrils [oval?] at base of bill subtubular.

The description can only apply to *D. melanophris*, a species then unknown and that remained unnamed until 1828. This account followed that of the Sheathbill (see above) on a day when the *Blonde* was about 100 miles SE of the Falklands.

### **Cape Petrel *Daption capense***

Procellaria capensis

Habits & manners with description of the Pintado or Cape Pidgeon--so called for being so common about the Cape Horn.

We did not see any of these birds on our coming round Cape Horn, but first fell in with them in about So Lat 30 & W. Long. 158. From thence they accompanied us every day until our arrival at Valparaiso. We consequently had a good opportunity of observing them. They are apparently the tamest of the petrel tribe, keeping constantly close in the wake of the ship, & are also the most voracious, biting at every thing thrown overboard, & are easily caught by a small hook or bent pin baited with a piece of fat. They are sometimes caught [procured] in dozens in this manner when the ship is going slow thro' the water & are reckoned good eating by the sailors. Their mottled brown & white color is very pleasing to the eye.

They are about 14 inches long, the head dark brown, the back to the extremity of the tail which is black is freckled white & black. The upper surface of the wings are tipped at the end with black, then an irregular white mark, then black & again an irregular white mark to the back. The under parts are white.

The wings project nearly at right angles with their bodies, & they seldom flap them. It is difficult indeed to conceive in what manner they can go against the wind, without any apparent motion of their wings, but if attentively observed, a slight & almost constant quivering of them is observed, which no doubt greatly aids them on. Nature has wonderfully provided for all the birds of the petrel & albatross race, in giving them immense strength of muscle in their wing & also the latter of immense length, but slight breadth, to skim over the waves of the ocean with the least possible resistance from the air. Their feathers also are of great thickness & plentifully supplied with oil to resist the cold & water. Thus armed by nature they subsist during the greater part of the year roaming over immense tracts of sea in search of food, returning to land only during the breeding season. Description of one caught on board. [I have omitted further description.] A very voracious, tame & pretty bird resembling a pidgeon in appearance. Can with great difficulty rise from the ground generally inhabits the cold parts of the Southern Hemisphere, particularly about C. Horn.

### **Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus***

Procellaria magna AB [=Andrew Bloxam]

24 Aug 1825. 33°15'S 121°41'W. A very large bird flying over the ship to day, struck against one of the after ropes & the concussion was so great as to bring him down in board. I found it to be one of the largest species of petrel. Length from bill to tail 32 inches, extent from wing to wing 6 feet 6 inch, bill 4 inches long, light olive green. Nostrils two tubes contained in one sheath. Tongue length of bill, entire fleshy & round at end. Legs brownish blue. Color deep brown or dark chocolate all over intermingled with lighter shades here & there. Tail rounded 14 [feather]s, light brown at the tip also the 1st quill feather. Called by the sailors a Nelly.

Bloxam must have overlooked the name *Procellaria gigantea* Gmelin in his copy of Turton (1800) when he coined his own name *P. magna* for the Giant Petrel *Macronectes gigantea*.

### Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* (?)

January 1826 The first few days in this month we fell in with several petrels of a species I had not seen before. They were about 12 or 14 inches long. Upper plumage brown, beneath white, a white ring round their neck, the head being brown. *Procellaria annulata* ring necked petrel.

The date would have put the *Blonde* in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands where the bird perhaps most likely to correspond to Bloxam's description would have been the Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, a species that would not have been known to Bloxam. His own name *Procellaria annulata* was never published and has no nomenclatural standing.

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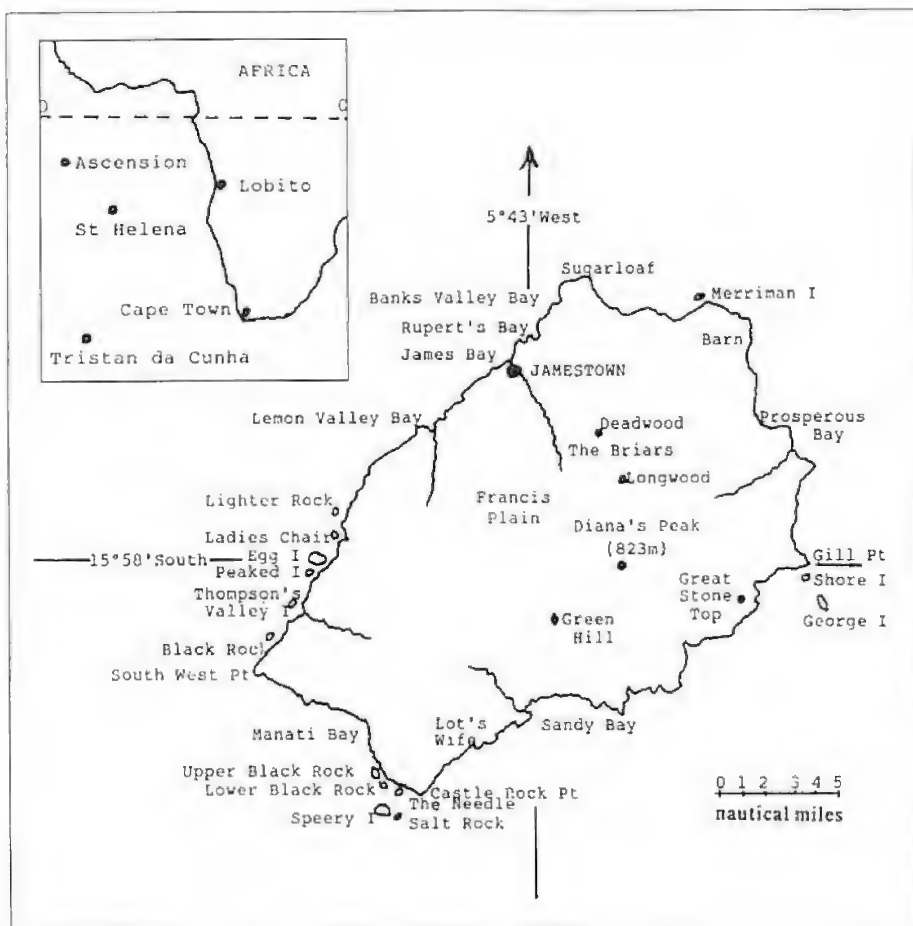


Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*, Antarctic Peninsula - January 1993.  
Photo: LA (Metoc) Chris Patrick RN.

# ST. HELENA'S OFFSHORE OUTLIERS, 1989-1992.

by Beau W. Rowlands

**Introduction.** St. Helena has some 24 offshore outliers - islets, stacks and rocks - which unlike the main island have enjoyed little coverage in the literature. This is largely due to St. Helena's isolated position in the South Atlantic. With no air service, the island receives comparatively few visitors, virtually all of whom arrive aboard RMS *St. Helena*, and most are in transit only. Moreover, the three principal seabird stacks (in terms of seabird breeding diversity) - Shore, George and Speery Islands - lie off the exposed eastern and southern sides, where access by boat is possible only by those who do not suffer sea-sickness! There are few days in the year when landings on these eastern and southern outliers can be attempted, and they seldom coincide with the few days available to a transit visitor. The outliers off the western (lee) side are more readily accessible, but they have a lower seabird breeding diversity.





All the outliers are basaltic, the larger ones exhibiting varying deposits of guano. The largest is lee-side Egg Island, 331m x 171m, rising to 79m. Speery Island, at 135m, is the tallest. On only four did I note vegetation, and all lack the soft damp soil necessary for burrowing petrels.

Before 1988 only six species of seabirds were known to breed at St. Helena (Benson 1950, Haydock 1954, Stonehouse 1960, 1963, Olson 1975, Harrison 1983, and Rowlands *et al.* in prep). These were the Madeiran Storm-petrel, *Oceanodroma castro*, Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, Lesser (or Black) Noddy *Anous tenuirostris*, Common (or Brown) Noddy *A. stolidus* and the White (or Fairy) Tern *Gygis alba*. The Red-billed Tropicbird, Lesser Noddy and White Tern breed not only on the outliers but also on mainland cliffs.

From Harrison (1983), neither the Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* nor the Brown Booby *S. leucogaster* were known to occur at St. Helena. I was therefore most surprised to come upon both species, off Jamestown, when I first visited the island in December 1988, whilst busy on seabird counts from the RMS *St. Helena* (Rowlands 1991, 1992). This prompted a special search for evidence of breeding, also the presence of other "unlikely" species such as petrels. During four visits between 1989 and 1992, with three circumnavigations and three short boat trips, I established that ten outliers harbour breeding seabirds, while a lee-side stack, Ladies' Chair, has been a nesting site for landbirds. Though vagrant petrels and shearwaters have occurred at St. Helena (Rowlands *et al.* in prep), the Madeiran Storm-petrel is the only tubenose known to breed at the island.

1989. On 31 January 1989 I commenced with the lee-side, landing on five outliers. The first was Thompson's Valley Island (15m high), where c.25 pairs of White Terns were present on the grassy summit; these were apparently incubating, but overhangs prevented further access. On Peaked Island (32m), there were c.650 nests of Lesser Noddies, almost entirely on a steep SE-facing cliff, with a few Common Noddies on a lower appendage enclosing a tiny inlet. A couple of shrubs clung on precariously. The Lesser Noddies had large young soon to fly. On Egg Island I searched for, but found no Madeiran Storm-petrels, only a few Common Noddy nests with eggs and newly hatched chicks; the adults protested vigorously. There were up to 350 nests of Lesser Noddies on a north-facing cliff, and a single Sooty Tern passed overhead. On Ladies' Chair (25m), on a precarious climb up a grassy slope with loose stones to a plug of rock forming its summit, I found only a few roosting Lesser Noddies and White Terns. On Lighter Rock (9m, two weeds found) there were up to ten pairs of Common Noddies, with at least three nests with fresh eggs, and 12 of Lesser Noddies.

On 2 February aboard the 8 ton motorboat *Catfish* I made an anti-clockwise circumnavigation. Although it was a superb day, a hefty groundswell in the south and east prevented landings. On Upper Black Rock (58m) I counted 67 nests of Lesser Noddy, with six on Lower Black Rock, and four on the Needle, all hitherto previously unrecorded sites. Speery Island, by far the most imposing stack, harboured c.1,000 nests of Lesser Noddies; also seen were Madeiran Storm-petrels, Red-billed Tropicbirds, Sooty Terns, Common Noddies and White Terns (c.50 birds seen). On neighbouring Salt Rock I counted 145 nests of Lesser Noddy. Our approach to Shore and George Islands, off Gill Point in the east, soon confirmed them as the headquarters of the two species of Booby.



George Island, St. Helena, 28 January 1992. Note large cavern to left of summit - "The Hood" - where Lesser Noddies breed.



Shore Island and Gill Point (St. Helena), as seen from George Island, 6 February 1992.

Photos: Beau W. Rowlands.

We examined both islands closely from the boat.

Shore Island (56m) is very steep. In addition to the two boobies, it is home also to the Madeiran Storm-petrel, Sooty Tern, the two noddies and White Tern. On an inaccessible ledge on the SE side was a single large Brown Booby chick, not quite fully fledged, flexing its wings and soliciting food from two adults. This is the first breeding record for this species. Young seen at Ascension Island 13 days earlier suggested breeding in phase. The Brown Boobies occupied sites at levels lower than the Masked Boobies, numbering c.20 adults at Shore Island, and c.10 at George Island.

George Island measures 208m x 89m in size, rising to 32m in height, and is shaped like a large shoe, with its "toe" pointing into the SE'ly swell. It harbours the same species as Shore Island, except for the White Tern. We counted c.70 Masked Boobies on Shore Island and c.80 on George Island, including a fully-fledged juvenile. We returned to Jamestown along the north coast, landing briefly on Merriman Island, a small 7m islet off The Barn, where we found only roosting Lesser Noddies and numerous crabs.

The following day I revisited Egg Island, climbing to the summit where I examined the Cockburn's Battery (three old 1815 guns) for Madeiran Storm-petrels (see Stonehouse 1960, 1963), but found none. Two Sooty Terns passed overhead. I also landed on Black Rock (9m), near South West Point, but found only Common and Lesser Noddies.

1991-1992. I next visited St. Helena in May 1991. I circumnavigated clockwise, on 20 May, with landings only on Peaked Island and Lighter Rock; no birds were found breeding, even though the *Catfish* skipper, Trevor Otto Thomas, climbed to the summit of Peaked Island. It was a particularly rough trip, and even Egg Island was inaccessible. Only five pairs of Masked Boobies were seen in the vicinity of George and Shore Islands. However, Madeiran Storm-petrels were prolific this time, flitting about over both islands - c.30 over Speery and c.50 over Egg. Red-billed Tropicbirds and six Sooty Terns were also seen at Speery Island. A Common Noddy followed the boat from Ruperts Bay to Gill Point, and we saw 15 between Salt Rock and James Bay. No Lesser Noddies were seen - the birds were absent - though the colony on Upper Black Rock had expanded. About 50 White Terns were seen at Speery Island, and at Thompson's Valley Island I counted eight birds.

On 28 January 1992 I circumnavigated clockwise once again aboard *Catfish* but did not land. We saw c.60 Masked Boobies on George Island, and c.100 at

Shore Island. Eight Madeiran Storm-petrels and 14 Sooty Terns were counted around Speery Island. Only two Brown Boobies were seen, off Prosperous Bay. Numbers of the two noddies were similar to 1989, with the Upper Black Rock colony of Lesser Noddies yet expanding, and we spotted a colony of 12 Common Noddies on Salt Rock. White Terns were present at both Thompson's Valley Island and Speery Island (again c.25 pairs at each), and two at Salt Rock.

I finally succeeded in landing on George Island, at the fourth attempt, on 6 February. This was only possible due to a slight eleventh-hour change of direction of the swell. This was also my final morning, as I departed in RMS *St. Helena* for Tenerife and the UK, at noon. We set out from Jamestown aboard the 4-ton motor catamaran *Ocean Spray*. The landing was a highly perilous and tricky operation, involving ropes, a dinghy, and a rise-and-fall of some 25 feet in the white water. This would explain why there have been only two known previous



Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*, George Island, St. Helena, 6 February 1992. (Note variation in feet colour).  
Photo: Beau W. Rowlands.

ornithological landings - by W.K. Cuyler of the *Blossom* expedition on 10 October 1925 (Olson, 1975) and by E.L. Haydock (1954) on 25 November 1952, both of whom landed also on Shore Island. Our efforts were well rewarded, for in our 90 minutes on the island (0730-0900), we found 20 pairs of Sooty Terns with fledgling chicks, 75 nests of Common Noddy with eggs, c.60 nests of Lesser Noddies (11 with large young about to fly) and, higher up, 25 Masked Boobies, with five others in flight. The Lesser Noddies were inside The Hood, a large open cave, nesting high up below the overhang. The Common Noddies, although approachable to within two metres, were not aggressive, probably

because here they are not subject to disturbance. We saw no Madeiran Storm-petrels, though a cavity in guano deposits on the summit containing wind-blown booby feathers and other material was possibly a nest site. Nor did we find Brown Boobies.

Adult Masked Boobies only were present. The season was apparently over (chicks flown) but, as in 1989, the adults were sitting or standing close together in pairs, some in active courtship (neck-rubbing). We found nine eggs, all addled, including a clutch of two attended by an adult on the summit; the nest was a shallow scrape lined with tiny pebbles. These two were infertile - 61.6mm x 45.9mm (65g) and 62.5mm x 44.6mm (60g). The other eggs, some embedded in guano, had all rolled from nest sites; three were 68.1mm x 46.2mm (69g, large embryo), 60.3mm x 46.8mm (55g), and 60.4mm x 44.1mm (63g). The latter two contained half-developed embryos. The birds were very shy, not allowing a close approach. No evidence of crab predation could be found, although the island, including the summit, was inhabited by numerous crabs *Grapsus grapsus*.

**Conclusion.** Having now confirmed breeding, I came away with another query. The Masked Boobies at Ascension Island and Ilha da Trindade/Martin Vas (Rowlands *et al.*, in prep.) have orange legs and feet, whereas those in the western Indian Ocean at Mauritius and Cargados Carajos (pers. obs.) have grey. But the legs and feet of the birds on George Island varied between these two colour groups, with many a yellow ochre colour. A study of the legs and feet colour of St. Helena birds may well reveal that they are either a distinct population, or else a mix of Atlantic birds and vagrants from the western Indian Ocean.

This and other secrets still await the active seabirder at St. Helena. Certainly, stacks such as Shore Island, Salt Rock, Upper Black Rock and Speery Island need to be explored more fully because they should house far more birds than can be observed from the mainland, or a boat, and possibly even new species. However, such an undertaking would require exceptional fitness, seamanship and mountaineering skills. Perhaps this challenge will yet be taken up one day. As for me, St. Helena has been a superb experience, and no doubt I shall be back again in the not too distant future.

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# THE MOVEMENTS OF BULWER'S PETREL AND THE LARGER SHEARWATERS IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

By Dr W.R.P. Bourne

In the course of RNBWS activity in the Atlantic in the 1980s (Bourne and Curtis 1985, 1986) some new information was recorded about the transequatorial migrations of the petrels, and it may be useful to review it.

## Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*.

The annual cycle and distribution of this small dark gadfly-petrel which frequents the centres of the warmer oceans, long remained obscure. Its breeding behaviour has recently been summarised by Mougin *et al.* (1992) and O'Daniel (1993), who found that it breeds in the summer at the northern colonies in the central North Atlantic and Pacific archipelagoes, but breeding may be more prolonged in the tropics. The first evidence that it migrates was provided by van Ordt and Kruijt (1953), who found it absent from the vicinity of the North Atlantic colonies in the winter, when one was present off the Antilles, numbers off NE Brazil and one SW of St. Helena in December and January. Bailey *et al.* (1968) have also found birds, which may come from the Pacific, widespread in the Indian Ocean.

RNBWS experience of the species had an auspicious beginning. On 24 Jan '57 a bird originally identified as a Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* was ringed on HMY *Britannia* at 12.5°S 09.4°W, half-way between Ascension and St. Helena, which had a length of 10" (255mm), wingspan 24" (605mm), wing 7.5" (190mm), tail 3.8" (97mm), culmen 0.8" (20mm) and tarsus 1" (25mm), which agrees much better with Bulwer's Petrel. We have now had many records between 40°N and S, most around the main known breeding stations at Madeira and the Salvages in the spring, and NE of Brazil in the autumn (Map 1), with some in the Indian Ocean and western North Pacific. They show a well-defined movement between the North and South Atlantic with the seasons (Table 1), the main gap occurring in the northern spring, when it appears that they may be dispersed in the eastern South Atlantic. There they have apparently often also been confused with the equally agile, but much larger Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera* ever since the time of Edward Wilson, (See figures 222 and 242-4 of *Edward Wilson's Birds of the Antarctic*), so we have few reliable observations.

Table 1: Records of Bulwer's Petrel.

Latitude	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
30-40°N	8	1	2								15	9
20-30°N	1	5	11						1	3	16	
10-20°N		8		6	3					4	8	
0-10°N				22	50	9				2	11	
0-10°S			1	8	14	3		4	1	4	2	
10-20°S					2	11	4	2				
20-30°S					4	3	6	4		1		
30-40°S								2				

### Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*.

The movements of this species (or superspecies: Map 2) are discussed by Mougín *et al.* (1988). The large North Atlantic race *C.d.borealis* migrates to the western South Atlantic, where what are presumably the adults can be seen to moult. The medium-sized nominate Mediterranean race migrates through the Strait of Gibraltar in November, and down the east side of the Atlantic, to winter off South Africa, where it may occur round to the vicinity of Durban. Most return again through the Strait of Gibraltar in late February, but some, presumably lost young birds, move north up the east side of Africa to the Arabian and Red Seas later in the year (Shirihai 1987), and Captain Simpson (1979) may also have seen two in the Persian/Arabian Gulf in August 1985. The small Cape Verde form *C. (d.) edwardsi* appears to stay within the tropical Atlantic (Bourne and Curtis 1985). Presumed immatures linger in the South Atlantic into the southern winter, and up to 20 birds/km were wrecked all down the east coast of Brazil, when they moved north in May and June 1994 (Lima 1994, reviewed on page 58 of this report; Olmos *et al.* 1995). They then spread across the entire width of the North Atlantic, where they moult, sometimes reaching SW British seas in the autumn (Newell 1968).

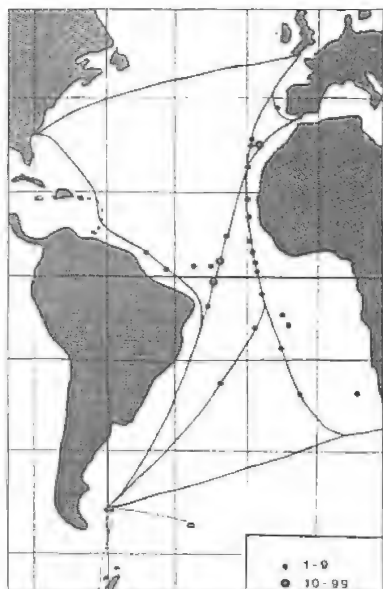
### Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*.

The Great Shearwater performs possibly the most spectacular migration of any Atlantic seabird (Map 3), described by Voous and Wattel (1963), and we have many past reports of it in *Sea Swallow* (e.g. 14:14, 18:19-20, 20:51, 22:42, 34:24). The concentrated movement north by the old birds in mid-May from the main breeding-place in the Tristan-Gough group past NE Brazil to moult in the NW Atlantic is described by Metcalfe (1966), and I also saw 645 birds pass north in an hour at 07.4°S 34.4°W along the 100 fathom line, 25nm offshore north of Recife on 19 May '85 though, despite many voyages there, we have no observations of northwards movements off west Africa comparable with those by W.H. Bierman and D. Stam (Voous and Wattel, 1963). There was another spectacular wreck of up to 24.5 young birds/km. along the east coast of North America, from the Carolinas north to Delaware, when they followed the adults north in June 1969 (Watson 1970).

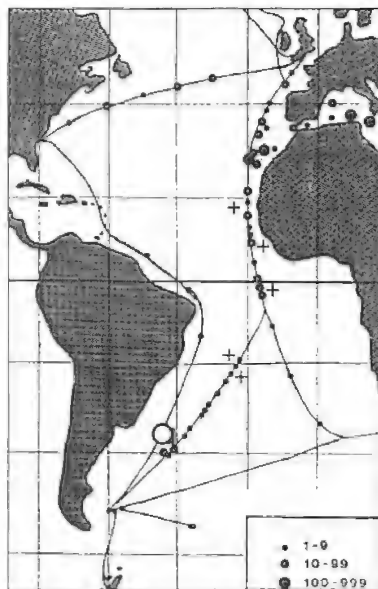
The old birds appear to return south individually, and in scattered flocks in mid-ocean, in August and September, with a maximum rate in the South Atlantic of 18/hr. at 26.0°S 26.6°E on 19 Sep '84. Meanwhile, as suggested by Rowan (1952), the immatures appear to cross the North Atlantic in the "West Wind Drift" during the northern summer to feed over the line of upwelling along the shelf-break in the Bay of Biscay in the autumn, without moulting (Bourne 1986); numbers sometimes also reach British and Irish seas, as in 1965 (Newell 1968). They return south off West Africa in December, and the maximum rate reached 22 in 50 mins at 16.3°N 18.4°W north of Cape Verde on 2 Dec '83. These are presumably the birds which become common and moult between South Georgia and southern South America until May (Watson 1971), when they outnumber the Sooty Shearwaters after these start north in April. A growing number of Great Shearwaters (and also Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus*) are now being reported in the Pacific, after apparently migrating north up the west coast of the Americas.

### Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*.

The majority of this species are found in the Pacific, and possibly only between a tenth and a hundredth of the number of Great Shearwaters occur in the Atlantic. Their migrations show a number of variations (Phillips 1963, Map 4). They are commoner over the continental shelves, while the Great Shearwaters tend to be commoner further out to sea. They also breed further south, in the Falklands and southern Chilean islands, with an outpost at Tristan da Cunha (Ryan *et al.* 1990), and in keeping with

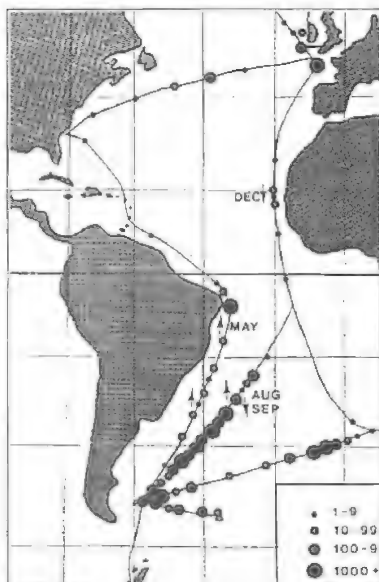


Map 1. Recent RNBWS records of Bulwer's Petrel in the Atlantic Ocean.

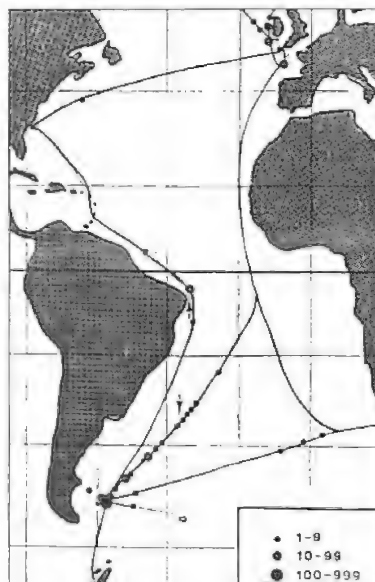


Map 2. Records of Cory's Shearwater during personal voyages in the 1980s.

Key.  
 + - Cape Verde Shearwaters *Calonectris (diomedea) edwardsi* identified at sea.  
 ○ - two individuals of the North Atlantic race *C.d.boreali* came on board.



Map 3. Personal records of Great Shearwaters in the 1980s.



Map 4. Personal records of Sooty Shearwaters in the 1980s.

this, lay later but migrate earlier; the presumed non-breeders summer over the eastern boundary currents in lower latitudes, and off the far eastern Antarctic ice (van Oordt and Kruijt 1953). At the other end of their range, they do not go so far north around Greenland in the NW Atlantic, but further north over the European continental shelf in the NE. (Serventy *et al.* 1971, Woods 1975, Cramp and Simmons 1977, Marchant and Higgins 1990).

It seems debatable to what extent the different populations and age-classes participate in these movements. A juvenile ringed on 3 May '62 in the Falklands was recovered four weeks later on 1 June in Barbados (Woods 1975), and adults ringed in Australasia have been recovered all round the North Pacific (Marchant and Higgins 1990), so clearly both age-groups may cross the equator. On the other hand, birds in moult during the southern winter, which are therefore presumably adult, occur in both the North Pacific and around Australasia (Marchant and Higgins 1990), so clearly all the adults do not cross the equator. The apparent non-breeders also do not appear to linger so long in the northern hemisphere as does the Great Shearwater, but seem more widely dispersed in the south. Even where they occur regularly, the birds appear to come and go very freely, so it seems possible that they may be comparatively nomadic, wandering about to take advantage of fluctuations in local oceanographic and meteorological conditions. If this is so, clearly it might prove very interesting to have more birds ringed.

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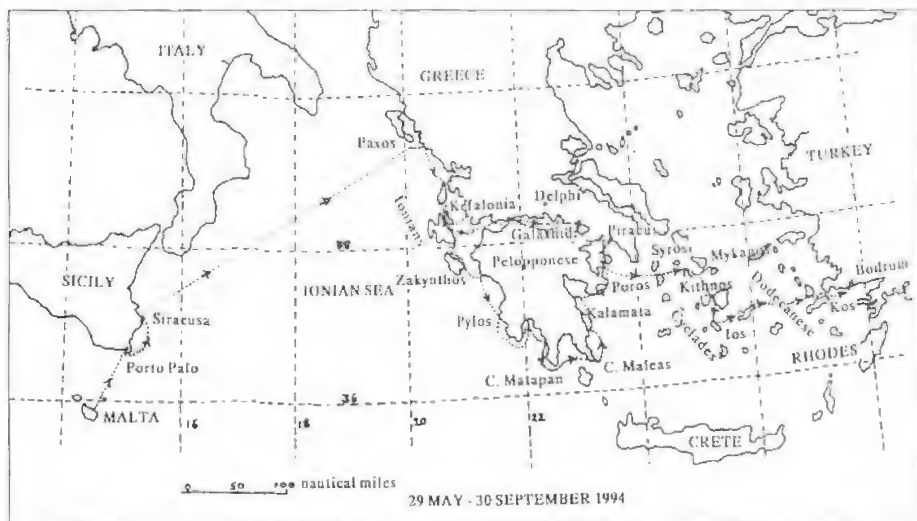


## BIRDS, BOATS AND BINOCULARS - A BIRDWATCHER'S CRUISE FROM MALTA TO GREECE AND TURKEY BY YACHT.

by Judith Pentreath

Salvation Jane is a 40ft ketch, owned by my husband and me since 1991, and in 1993, we sailed her from Poole on a four-month cruise through the French canals and rivers to Malta, where we laid her up for the winter in preparation for exploring the Mediterranean. High on our list of priority stores were binoculars, bird books and bikes, in order to make the best of our opportunities for seeing birds.

Last summer, we sailed from Malta on 29th May and made our leisurely way via Sicily and Greece to Bodrum in Turkey, arriving there on 30th September. I suppose in any year the months of June, July and September in the Mediterranean are probably not very good for birding, but 1994 was the hottest for 50 years, with temperatures continuously in the high 90's and 100's. It was pretty intolerable, and the only times I could bird watch with any degree of comfort was for an hour or two in the early morning or late afternoon, and even then my binoculars would be totally steamed up, with sweat pouring off my face. The bikes also were little used for exploring ashore, because it was much too hot, and too hilly.



Our first stop was Porto Palo, a small fishing harbour on the southern tip of Sicily, where we had a rewarding half-hour walk ashore and saw Hoopoe, Woodchat Shrike, Corn and Reed Buntings, Fan-tailed and Sardinian Warblers, Tree Sparrows and Blackbirds. From thence we sailed to Siracusa, before setting off on the 300-mile crossing of the Ionian Sea. The passage started rather dully - grey drizzly - until the skies cleared with a NWly wind; we roared through the starlit night to be greeted by four dolphins leaping simultaneously out of the water into the golden path of the rising sun as 48 hours later we approached the island of Paxos, our port of entry into Greek territorial waters. Alas, we sighted no birds throughout.

Our next stage, from Paxos to Mesolongion in the Gulf of Patras, visiting 11 different harbours on the way, brought a variety of birds: Olivaceous and Sardinian

Warblers, Green and Goldfinches, Great Tits, Alpine Swifts and Yellow-legged Gulls at Paxos, and hundreds of Pallid Swifts swooping around a huge cave near Port Leone; also Barn Swallows, a few Red-Rumped Swallows and House Martins. While sailing through the Levkas Canal we saw eight Black-winged Stilts, also Common Terns daintily fishing, and Little Egrets stalking in the shallows. On arrival at Port Vliki, Levkas, a Golden Eagle was soaring above the large and tranquil bay surrounded by tree-clad mountains. During the night here we heard Scops, Tawny and Little Owls.

On the uninhabited island of Petala we heard three churring Nightjars, as we sipped our "sundowners" in the cockpit in the gathering dusk, and next day (23rd June), we saw our first Rock Nuthatches - very jolly and spry little birds with a lovely song - and thereafter we continued to see them quite often. In this remote and unspoilt area we saw several Golden Eagles, also Buzzards, Kestrels, Yellow-legged Gulls and Cory's Shearwaters. On one occasion, with flat calm and a mirror-like sea, the latter were noticed plunging in like Gannets, which is something I have not seen before.

We arrived at the tiny mediaeval port of Navpaktos on 25th June, and climbed up the steep hill to the castle, through the pine woods, but saw very little other than a few Chaffinches, a fleeting glimpse of a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and a Red Squirrel peeping at us through the branches. From



here we worked our way up the Gulf of Corinth to Galaxhidi, a charming unspoilt little town, with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Lesser Kestrels wheeling and soaring overhead, while their fledgelings sat on the roof-tops waiting to be fed.

From Galaxhidi we caught the early morning bus into the mountains, to see the stunning ruins of Delphi. These were alive with Rock Nuthatches singing their delightful song from every fallen column or stone, while there were many Woodchat Shrikes perched on the top of cypress trees, their bright red heads and snowy-white breasts gleaming in the morning sunlight. Crag Martins were dashing around the cliff-face, with Lesser Kestrels wheeling and 'mewing', and also a Golden Eagle and two Griffon Vultures soaring overhead.

Moving on to Kefalonia on 7th July, we saw a Cirl Bunting, a Lesser Grey Shrike, numerous Woodchat Shrikes, two Great Reed Warblers, a Crested Lark, four possible Short-toed Larks, and four Northern Wheatears.

Kingfishers seemed to like caves, and at our next island, Zakynthos, we saw our first of several during a boat trip to the "Blue Grotto Caves", on 10th; it must have been very disturbed by the number of these tripper boats going in and out daily. At Pylos, on 13th, the sky overhead was filled with literally thousands of swifts - Common and Alpine - screeching around. A few miles further down the coast, the crumbling fortress of Methoni was full of flowers, butterflies and birds - Barn and Red-rumped Swallows swooping into underground buildings, Collared Doves gently murmuring, Stonechats perched on thistle stems, and large twittering flocks of Goldfinches and Linnets.

We abandoned Salvation Jane in the stifling heat of Kalamata Marina, to spend a few therapeutic days with friends who live in the fishing village of St. Nikolaos, a

90-minute drive further down the Mani Peninsula. On early morning walks on a track along the coast and through the olive groves, we found Woodchat Shrikes a-plenty, Rock Nuthatches singing from stone walls, Red-rumped Swallows swooping about the cliffs, with Swifts hurtling around overhead. There were Blackbirds, Sardinian and Olivaceous Warblers in the bushes and scrub, and flocks of Goldfinches feeding their demanding young. Most memorable was an early morning swim when a Kingfisher suddenly dived from a rock just ahead of me, surfaced with a fish, shook itself and flew off to feed two hungry young hovering hopefully nearby. From Kalamata we sailed round the southern end of the Peloponnese, to reach Piraeus on 1st August, where we stayed only briefly, leaving for a more peaceful anchorage at Angistri I. Thence we sailed to Porto Epidaurus, where we took a taxi to visit and marvel at the huge amphitheatre, and subsequently sailed on to Methana. From here we returned to the UK for three blissfully cool green and peaceful weeks in the Isle of Wight, while our two sons and their own "birds" borrowed Salvation Janes for their fun in the sun.

## Part 2

On our return to Methana, on 27th August, we found Salvation Jane in good order and set off on our next leg across the Aegean, via several islands of the Cyclades Group, to Bodrum, Turkey. At Kithnos, I had some lovely early-morning birding, up a huge dry wadi, with hills rising steeply on either side and large flocks of Crested Larks and Linnets feeding among the remains of crops in the drystone-wall enclosed fields. I was lucky to spot a Hoopoe flying past, several Blue Rock Thrushes, Red-backed Shrikes with many young, as well as several Lesser Grey Shrikes, a few Northern Wheatears, Stonechats and Sardinian Warblers, while a Buzzard and a Kestrel had an aerial sparring match overhead in the deepening blue sky.

Birding, and day-time temperatures began to improve generally from now onwards, and we started to see many Eleonora's Falcons soaring and swooping effortlessly and gracefully around the sheer cliffs. Best of all, however, was in the late afternoon and early morning of 7th and 8th September, on Skhinoussa I. where I saw my first Golden Oriole, a magnificent male - with stunning views of it on both days. I also saw another "first" for me - a Black-eared Wheatear, also Lesser Grey and Red-backed Shrikes, Whinchats, "willow/chiffs". Whitethroats, hundreds of Linnets flying from bush to bush in large twittering flocks, Olivaceous Warblers in the trees, and Sardinian Warblers in the scrub, as well as Spotted Flycatchers darting off after insects. I caught a glimpse of a Kingfisher as it flashed past me up the river bed, while Lesser Kestrels soared lazily overhead on thermals; Hooded Crows looked handsome in the bright light, and a pair of Ravens made their distinctive croak, as they flew past. More Eleonora's Falcons were seen: on 9th off Amorgos - 4-5 off N. Ofidhousa and 8-10 off N. Andikaros, and four on 10th seen on passage to Leros; 20+ were counted on 13th off Kalymnos. I went ashore at our next anchorage, the



tiny uninhabited islet of Plati, where I saw Ravens, a lone Eleonora's Falcon flying low over the island, some Lesser Whitethroats and Willow Warblers flitting around the bushes in a little ravine, Whinchats and Isabelline Wheatears, several Red-backed Shrikes, Sardinian Warblers flying in and out of the scrub, and a party of Blue Rock Thrushes luring me ever onwards as they hid behind rocks and sang their lovely song. A Grey Heron was standing in the shallows, undisturbed by a Kingfisher flashing by, with three Cormorants fishing close offshore.

We then sailed about 20 miles beyond Kalymnos, and Leros I., eventually mooring in tiny Port Augusta, in Arki I., where the birds outnumbered people. The scrub in the hills above the port was alive with Sardinian Warblers and Crested Larks, also hovering Kestrels, Buzzards and Hooded Crows. Near the harbour quay I saw Pied Wagtails, a Kingfisher, and a handsome Audouin's Gull jealously guarding its rock from combative Yellow-legged Gulls. I spent a long time looking at a couple of tiny warblers in a shrub, and with the aid of my fieldguide eventually came to the conclusion they were Bonelli's Warblers, perhaps migrating? I saw one Isabelline Wheatear, some Willow Warblers and Whinchats, the ubiquitous Red-backed Shrikes, and in the reeds fringing the beach, 4-6 Yellow Wagtails.

We returned to Kos for our final crew-change, on 23rd September, and then sailed the last eight miles to Bodrum, Turkey. We much enjoyed our final week of lovely cruising in the Gulf of Kos. The beautiful bays of Sogut and English Harbour were full of Jays, Long-tailed, Great and Blue Tits, Willow Warblers, Spotted and Pied Flycatchers, Goldfinches chattering on great stems of thistle heads, Blackbirds, and a pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers high up in the pine tops; we also heard the 'yaffle' of a Green Woodpecker. At night, we heard both Scops and Tawny Owls, despite the mind-boggling din coming from a nearby disco! The idyllic tiny anchorage next to English Harbour we named "Kingfisher Bay", as it was home to several, and we were able to watch them at very close quarters bathing, preening, bathing and preening again, before 'pinging' their way down the inlet to a different perch. Our last anchorage before returning to Bodrum was Fish Bay, and during a good walk along the dried river-bed we saw Crested Larks, Isabelline Wheatears, Pied Wagtails, an unusually bold Blue Rock Thrush, "willow/chiffs", Red-backed Shrikes, and a Common Sandpiper bobbing along the water's edge.

We had a few days in Bodrum preparing to lay up Salvation Jane for the winter. We found it a really fun place with the most charming and helpful people, while the magnificent great crusader fortress built by the Knights of St. John, dramatically floodlit at night, kept brooding watch over the town. We took the boat five miles down the coast to Icmeler, where we laid her up in the excellent Yat Lift Boatyard. This is quite the most attractive yard we have ever experienced, the boats sheltering beneath great pines, with Serins, Great Tits, Collared Doves, Spotted Flycatchers and Swallows darting around, and Scops Owls calling at night.

We left Bodrum and flew home on 7th October. We had sailed 1,600 nautical miles, visited 80 ports, harbours and islands, met many interesting "yachties" from all corners of the world. We had recorded 89 species of birds, including 12 "life ticks", and four "doubtfuls"; we are well-placed and eager to explore Turkey in 1995.

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LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM  
OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA,  
1993

Summarised by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy.

As last year, landbird observations have been extracted by Captain Peter Chilman from seabird record sheets received from the Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus* operating at or near Station LIMA (57°N 20°W - 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland). The records are disappointingly few, and once again lack important identification details, and the normal details of weather factors affecting landbird migration. The following species were noted, on the dates shown:

Eider *Somateria molissima*. Four on 29 May.

"Blue-winged Teal" (no details) 5 Nov (1)

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*. Singles on 10 and 13 May.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. Singles on 14, 15 and 16 May.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*. Singles on 10 and 15 Jun, 11 June (3).

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. 11 May (1), 12 May (2), 19 May (1)

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Singles on 11 and 16 June.

"Female Redstart" (no details) 22 Oct at 62.6°N 19.6°W.

"Yellow-browed Warbler" (no details) on 23 Sep.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*. 4 Nov (1).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*. 30 Oct (1).

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* 12 Oct (2).

"Juvenile Wagtail". One on 10 Oct.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. Singles on 23 Sep and 2 Nov.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. 12 Oct (1), 10 Nov (2).

**Comment.** The number of species (15) compares with previous years: 1986 (14), 1987 (17), 1988 (38), 1989 (14), 1990 (13), 1991 (19), 1992 (17), and 1993 (23). Most are regularly reported here, but further details of Blue-winged Teal, Yellow-browed Warbler and Redstart are essential for these very unusual records. A "Redstart" and Carrion Crows were reported during the same periods last year.

M.B.C.

HOOPOE IN THE BARENTS SEA, IN 1981

The record of a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* in the North Atlantic, near OWS Station LIMA on 3 September 1993 (see *Sea Swallow* 43:50, has prompted the following comment from Dr Robin Cox:

"When the diving company Wharton-Williams was salvaging the gold from HMS *Edinburgh* in the Barents Sea the late Mike Childs was the doctor on board. Mike died tragically young, but in his short life he and I were close friends, as well as professional colleagues. He was also a very keen and competent bird-watcher. The diving operations were conducted from MV *Stephaniturm* in September/October 1981. When Mike returned with many fascinating stories, not the least was the sighting of a Hoopoe on the vessel! It stayed for a day, and he took a photograph of it. Many times I asked him to send a note to one of the journals, but he never got around to it, and sadly died before the record could be officially published".

**COMMENT.** David Keogh, who was the MOD officer in charge of this operation has confirmed to me that he remembers this incident: a bird identified as a Hoopoe came aboard sometime in late September (he is unsure of the



exact date) and photographs were taken by several observers. The position was about 175nm north of Murmansk (72.5°N 35°E approx). This must surely be the northernmost record for a Hoopoe, at sea? Can any reader provide further details of this, or a similar event? Since Stamp *et al* BWP IV: 788 shows this species as "Accidental. Spitzbergen, Iceland and Faeroes", it seems probable that these may also have been ship-assisted.

M.B.C.

# 1994 SUMMARY OF SEABIRD SIGHTINGS AT STATION LIMA (57°N 20°W)

Month 1993	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Observation days (285)	24	25	24	24	28	22	21	20	24	17	22	24
Fulmar	x	o	o	+	o	o	x	x	o	x	o	o
Great Shearwater				-		-	-	+	o	x	-	
Sooty Shearwater				-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Manx Shearwater			-	+	-		-	-	-		-	
British Storm-petrel							-		-	-	-	
White-faced Storm-petrel				-								
Gannet	-	o	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	
Great Skua			-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	
Pomarine Skua					-		-	-	-	-	-	
Arctic Skua						-	-		-	-		
Long-tailed Skua								-				
Herring Gull						-			-		-	
Lesser Black-back		-	-	+	+	-		+	-		-	-
Great Black-back	+	-	-	+	-	-		+	+			
Glaucous Gull	-											
Iceland Gull	-											
Kittiwake	o	o	x	+	o	+	+	o	o	x	o	o
Black-headed Gull					-						-	
Little Gull												
Sandwich Tern							-					
Arctic Tern							-					
Common Tern							-					
Guillemot					-	-						

**Key**    - Occasional sightings      o Average 10 - 49 per day  
           + Average 1 - 9 per day        x Average 50 or more per day

## SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA(57°N 20°W), 1994

Summarised by Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

All observations are from OWS Cumulus, and the format of the summary remains as in previous years. The total number of observation days for 1994 was 275 - ten days less than 1993.

Totals of daily counts (including immatures shown in brackets, where recorded) were:

Fulmar 10,207 (9 blue phase); Great Shearwater 2,662; Sooty Shearwater 23; Manx Shearwater 72; Gannet 772 (56); Herring Gull 5 (1); Lesser Black-backed Gull 291 (73); Great Black-backed Gull 283 (165); Glaucous Gull 17; and Kittiwakes 7,543.

After reporting increases in the numbers of Fulmars and Kittiwakes for the last seven years, sometimes huge increases, the numbers have now fallen dramatically - Fulmars down to 10,207 from 25,874 last year, and Kittiwakes to 7,543 from 41,741. This year, the numbers of Great Shearwaters are less than half of that of 1993 - 2,662 against 5,947 - these are actually only counts of a couple of flocks in September and October so do not mean much, as they are dependent on the observer being in the right place at the right time.

A Kittiwake was noted on 29 August with rings on both legs; White over Blue on right leg, and Green over Yellow over Blue on left leg.

A White-faced Storm-petrel was reported on 20 April at 48°N 16°W. No description was given but two observers report that they saw it closely and are sure of the identification.

We again have to thank the Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus* for continuing to provide this information.

#### SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM MET. LOGBOOKS.

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

Most of the reports on seabirds received from Met. Logbooks have been of species that could have been expected in the areas concerned. As usual, some of them I was unable to identify due to insufficient detail, although I was able to suggest possibilities in most cases.

MV *Orchid B*, (Captain R.B. Stevens) reported a pair of probable Laysan Albatrosses on board, in posn. 34°N 148.5°W, on 23 Jan'91. They were apparently courting, sitting close together facing each other and rubbing bills and heads together, snapping their bills, and preening each other. From time to time one would get up and strut around the other, giving a high-pitched squeaky call. The other sometimes also rose and walked with the first, but did not strut. They took off occasionally, but always returned to the same position on the foredeck; they finally left on 26 Jan, in posn. 34°N 168°W. The courting ritual was repeated frequently throughout this period.

MV *Pacific Sandpiper*, (Captain M.J. Stares), also reported a pair of Laysan Albatrosses on board, in posn. 35°N 132°W on 13 May '94, which remained for about an hour. They were also reported to be courting, and making noises with their bills.

MV *Hemina*, (Captain P. Vennell), reported a Double-breasted Cormorant on board in posn. 24°N 87°W (130nm north of C. Catoche, Yucatan) on 19 Oct'93, which sat on the bridge wing for about an hour before flying off. This is a very common bird, but I think it rather unusual to find it so far out to sea.

My thanks to all who took the trouble to report in the Met. Log, and to the Marine Department of the Meteorological Office for making them available.

Captain P.W.G. Chilman M.N., 15 Garbett Way, Bishopthorpe, York. YO2 1SF.

## SHORT NOTES

### THE EILAT SHEARWATER

by Dr W.R.P. Bourne

In *Sea Swallow* 43:8 we mentioned briefly a report, with photographs, by Hadoram Shirhai and Ian Sinclair of an unidentified small shearwater seen at Eilat, Israel, on 18-21 June 1992 (*Birding World* 7: 274-278). Neil Cheshire considers that it cannot have been my first suggestion, Hutton's Shearwater *Puffinus huttoni*, which migrates west from New Zealand into the Indian Ocean, because the bill was shorter and bluer, the legs were also blue-grey, and it had a steeper forehead with no white notch behind the ear-coverts, or dusky axillaries and broad dusky rear margin to the underwing.

The original authors and Peter Colston have now attributed it to a new species *P. atrodorsalis* in the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 115: 75-87. It is based on two immature specimens from Durban and Réunion, another examined and released at Durban, and sight records from there north up the east African coast to Mombasa and around Madagascar, and the Mascarene, Comoro and Seychelles islands, as well as Eilat. The coloration of the bare parts is said to be similar to that of the Little Shearwater *P. assimilis*, but it is larger, with a longer wing (162, 204.5mm), tail (74, 78mm) and bill (28.5, 28mm; tarsus also 39 and 40mm), and it lacks the predominantly white remiges below and variable pale extensions around the eye. It differs from Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri* in lacking the brown hue of the upperparts and undertail coverts, well-developed nasal tubes and maxillary unguis and pink legs.

As Mark Twain remarked about the *Pilgrim's Progress*, this tale is interesting but steep. I have known the Réunion specimen for 40 years, and I am not aware that anyone has previously seen fit to doubt that it is a fledgling Audubon's Shearwater in very fresh, dark-backed plumage. While the authors have copied out a lot of mainly other people's inconclusive measurements, they do not seriously consider the amount of fading that occurs in the brown-and-white shearwaters, discussed for the allied *yelkouan* group (where it has also been suggested that there might be an additional species on the basis of sight records) in *British Birds* 83: 299-317.

It would be possible to argue about these birds indefinitely, but fortunately there is now an ultimate arbiter available, the DNA analysis, which should have been considered before publication of this note. It will be interesting to find out what the biochemists, who are already at work on the shearwaters, have to say.

## AUTUMN MOVEMENT OF MEADOW PIPITS AND OTHER PASSERINES AT SEA IN THE WESTERN ENGLISH CHANNEL

by R.W. Arnold and C.J.Henty.

On 1 October 1990, we left St Malo on the 0700 ferry for Portsmouth; there was a light to moderate northerly wind, with skies initially overcast, and hazy, with visibility about 20nm.

Between 0900-0955 (when we were west of Jersey) 400 Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* passed heading S/SE, in a steady procession of small parties, flying at between 15-50m above sea level. This time of arrival suggests a dawn departure from the coast of SW England.

At 0955 it became sunny, and between then and 1045, when level with Guernsey and Sark, 340 pipits flew past, all in southerly directions, except for one which flew north. By 1120, when west of Cap de la Hague, 198 more were noted, and a further 193 by 1210, when we were some 5nm north of the Cap, with heavy cloud to the north; little movement was seen thereafter. Other passerines seen flying south included two flocks of finches, probably Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* or Linnet *Acanthus cannabina*, and a total of 50 hirundines, with all those positively identified being Swallows *Hirundo rustica*; in addition, two Pied/White Wagtails *Motacilla alba* flew north for a time, close to the ship, possibly following it. Thus, in about four hours, 1,133 Meadow Pipits passed on a fairly narrow front, probably being detected within about 1 km on either side of the ship.

Passage on this scale is not unusual; on 9 October 1958, RWA was on the southern cliffs of Herm (roughly 15km west of our 1990 track), and noted a large passage leaving southwards between 1105-1235. Identifications included: 502 Meadow Pipits, 210 Linnets, 140 hirundines (mainly House Martins *Delichon urbica*), five *alba* wagtails, three Goldfinches *C. carduelis*, one Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea* and one Skylark *Alauda arvensis*. This movement slackened markedly after 1135. This similarity with our 1990 observations suggests that the cessation of our ship-borne records was not because we had sailed out of a narrow migration stream, but was due to an actual cessation of the bird migration, in accordance with the usual time pattern of diurnal passage. Whether this heavy migration extends beyond the Channel Islands and the Cotentin Peninsular is a matter of conjecture.

Dr R.W. Arnold, School of Biological Sciences, Bangor.

Dr C.J. Henty, Department of Psychology, Stirling.

## SQUARE-RIGGED BIRDWATCHING

by Sandy King.

The brigantine Soren Larsen recently completed a year long voyage from Gloucester (UK) across the Atlantic, through Panama, then crossing the Pacific to her new home in Auckland, New Zealand. As one of the twelve permanent crew during this 18,500 mile voyage, I took on the role of co-ordinating a seabird observation programme, encouraging interested individuals among our 22 adult

trainees to watch for and record seabirds. Data collected during timed seabird watches were sent to RNBWS, and to a researcher for the Australian Antarctic Division.

Species identification was difficult at times, especially in tropical areas where birds tended not to approach the ship or follow for long enough to enable us to note diagnostic features. Being busy with watchkeeping, sail-handling or maintenance duties meant that by the time a call to help with identification reached me the bird in question was often a mere speck on the horizon.

Most of the interesting sightings occurred near islands, such as the Galapagos, where the ship was visited one night by a flock of about 50 **Swallow-tailed Gulls** *Creagrus furcatus* which left their mark on the brightwork, and we passed close to a flock of about 30 **Waved Albatross** *Diomedea irrorata* resting on the water near Isla Espanola (Hood Is.), where they breed. The albatrosses were a highlight for our northern hemisphere trainees. During the final days of our approach to New Zealand, in October 1994, the ship was accompanied by several immature **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans*, their presence causing an increase in the number of keen birdwatchers! Vast flocks of (unidentified) shearwaters heading south, also **Cape Petrels** *Daption capense* and storm-petrels following the ship also caused an upsurge of interest at this time.

Other highlights were provided by birds landing aboard, trying to keep their balance on spars high up in the rig. **Red-footed Boobies** *Sula sula* frequently alighted for a short time, and a **Brown Pelican** *Pelecanoides occidentalis* chose the course yard as a roost for a night. Occasionally at night, birds would become disorientated by navigation lights and land on deck. **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon rubricauda* and a **Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were all found by night watches, and had to be assisted back into the air.

**Soren Larsen** is now based in Auckland (Address: Squaresail Pacific, PO Box 32247, Devonport, Auckland, New Zealand), and will be regularly sailing among the South Pacific islands in 1995, and beyond.

Sandy King, PO Box 74, Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island, New Zealand.

## SWALLOW-TAILED GULLS USING LIGHT FROM SHIP TO ASSIST NOCTURNAL FEEDING.

OBSERVATIONS FROM HMS *ENDURANCE* ON 11 AND 12 APRIL 1994.

by Leading Airman (Met) Chris M.C. Patrick, RN.

On two consecutive nights while on passage north through the eastern Pacific near the equator, I observed **Swallow-tailed Gulls** *Creagrus furcatus* feeding by light cast from the ship.

The first of these observations occurred at 2200 on 11 April when my attention was drawn to a bird that appeared to be following the ship, in the light from the quarterdeck. It was a very dark clear night with no moon. Using Zeiss 8x56 binoculars I was able to watch an immature Swallow-tailed Gull repeatedly locate food using the light cast from the ship. It would fly up from behind the ship on the starboard side, where most light was cast, at a height of 4-5m and 8-10m from the ship's side. As it got level with the stern it would



slow down, remaining stationary relative to the ship until it saw something in the water; it would then swoop round in a tight circle away from the ship on bent wings and flutter down to the sea. Upon landing on the sea surface it faced away from the ship with wings raised and head held high, when not feeding on its prey. It was soon lost from view but after a minute or so it would catch up with the ship to repeat the procedure. Once, on sighting prey, the bird dived with head extended into the water, submerging all but its tail and wing tips for a moment.

The immature was joined after 25 minutes by an adult bird whose feeding method was similar apart from flying higher, (6-7m), with the immature sometimes directly below it. The adult would also turn smoothly in a wider circle on flat wings, before gliding gracefully down to the surface.

Both birds remained until at least 23.00. During this period the ship was heading north at 15 knots and the wind was from 190° at 8 knots. The ship's position was 02.1°S 081.3°W, 40 nm approx. west of Ecuador.

The following evening, 12 April, was overcast and dark. At 2300 an immature was seen, feeding identically to the immature of the previous evening, but stopped after only 10 minutes.

At no time was I able to see what they were feeding on. Harrison (1983) states that Swallow-tailed Gulls are "primarily nocturnal, catching fish and squid at night" and are "rather timid at sea, rarely approaching ships". But this method of feeding in association with ships may be regular; exactly a year before, when in the same area, I was informed by a member of the crew of "seagulls" following the ship at night.

## Reference.

Harrison, Peter. 1983. *Seabirds an identification guide*. Christopher Helm (Publications) Ltd. London.

Chris M.C. Patrick, 7 Wellington Court, The Nothe, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 8UA, England.

## MOTTLED PETREL *PTERODROMA INEXPECTATA* NEAR THE FALKLAND ISLANDS.

by First Officer (SE) (Comms) W.F. Curtis, RFA.

On 28 December 1994, a Mottled Petrel was observed SSE of the Falklands, at the edge of the shallow water of the Birdwood Bank. The bird was under observation for approximately three minutes. The drawing was made at the time, with the following written notes made immediately afterwards:

"At 1837 on 28th December 1994, in position 54°17.1'S, 059°02.7'W, a medium-sized "gadfly" petrel was observed about 1,000 yards away to the west, flying east. The first view of the bird was brief, as it passed through my field of view whilst watching a party of Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus*. As I only saw the upperparts, I assumed the bird to be a Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* but (fortunately) as I had not seen that species so far this voyage near the Falklands, I followed it rather than the skuas. Upperparts were basically brownish-grey with a darker area near the eye, and the usual dark 'M' across the carpals/back and onto the primaries. It came as a surprise, to say the least, when the bird swung and banked to reveal pale underwings; pale vent/undertail and a dark belly. Not having been in the Pacific since 1971, I was unable to put a name to the bird immediately, although well aware it was one of the 'cookilarias'.

A drawing was made of the bird during the three minutes it was in view, with a full description written immediately afterwards. On consulting the literature it was obvious that the bird was a Mottled Petrel; thought at the time to be the first for the area. The bird was observed from the initial 1,000 yards down to about 300 yards, and then out to over 1.5 miles.

**Description.**

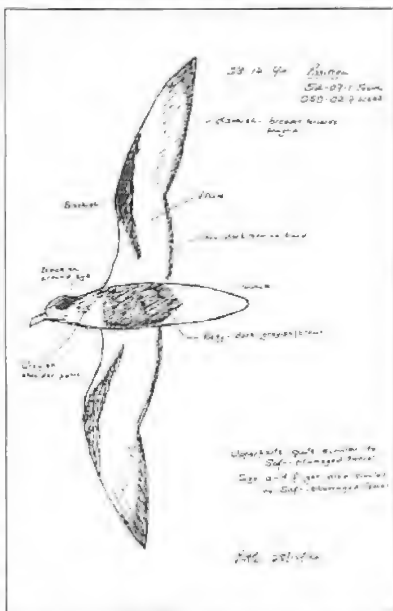
**Upperparts.** Initial impression: both in size and colouration, being quite reminiscent of Soft-plumaged Petrel; mainly brownish/grey with a noticeable, though not particularly distinct, darker 'M' along the coverts onto the primaries, where became broader and more diffuse. This dark line met across the lower back. Crown was darkish grey with a broadish, paler (greyish/white) forehead, this pale area extending to form an indistinct supercilium. Very dark, almost blackish, area below the eye conspicuously contrasting with whitish cheeks and lores. **Upperwings** greyish to brownish/grey with narrow blackish/brown line across the coverts to carpal, thence onto primaries where less noticeable; this line joining across the lower back. **Nape, saddle, rump and tail** - dark greyish to brownish/grey; darker terminal band to tail (though I saw at one point white on the outer tail-feathers).

**Underparts.** White except for a diffuse greyish (pale) half-collar from lower nape. Dark grey lower breast, belly and flanks; this being clean-cut along the borders, particularly along the axillaries. The white vent was very noticeable, in contrast to this dark area. The underwings were white excepting a dark brownish trailing edge to the primaries, being broadest at the wing-tip, and a vague, narrow dark edge to the leading primary. Broad, blackish (very conspicuous) leading edge to the inner wing from the carpal area onto the secondary cover

Bill, Black; shortish but quite stubby.

Feet and legs. Not seen.

Flight. Typically careening, normal *Pterodroma*; high swinging arcs, frequently turning back on itself to return the way it had come."



**COMMENT.** In the past when it was commoner, this species was first collected at 58.8°S 81.9°W off Tierra del Fuego and 36.8°S 111.5°W south of Easter Island in 1769, during Cook's first expedition; and again at 68°S 95°W in the Bellinghausen Sea in 1839, during the United States Exploring Expedition (*Ibis* 109: 153). There were no further records near South America until Szijf reported several off Valparaiso in 1964 (*Auk* 84: 366-378), and while Melfoto and Horneman (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 115: 71-72) have suggested that these might have been Juan Fernandez or Stejneger's Petrels *Pterodroma externa* or *P. longirostris*, these birds normally stay over warmer water further offshore. They also wrongly state that a record of their own at 55.7°S 65.5°W on 18 December 1993 was 130nm SSE of Cape Horn, whereas this position is actually about 50nm ESE of the Cape and 300nm WSW of the present record, which thus appears to be the first for the South Atlantic.

W.R.P.B.

## References.

Harrison, P. 1983. *Seabirds an identification guide*. Christopher Helm (Publications) Ltd, London.

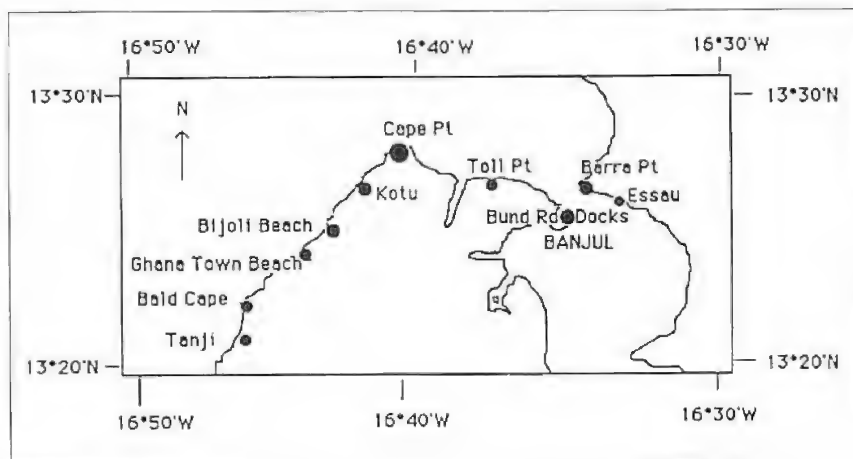
Meltofte, H. & Homeman, C. 1995. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 115:71-72.

W.F. Curtis, Farm Cottage, Church Lane, Atwick, Driffield, E. Yorks YO25 8DH.

# OBSERVATIONS OF SEABIRDS FROM THE GAMBIAN COASTLINE

## 3 - 9 FEBRUARY 1994

by Stephen Hales and Derek Hallett.



### Sites visited:

Location	Position	Location	Position
Cape Point	13°29'N 16°40'W	Tanji Bald Cape	13°23'N 16°47'W
Toll Point	13°28'N 16°38'W	Kotu	13°23'N 16°43'W
Banjul Bund Road	13°27'N 16°36'W	Banjul Docks	13°27'N 16°35'W
Bijoli Beach	13°25'N 16°44'W	Barra Point	13°20'N 16°34'W
Ghana Town Beach	13°23'N 16°46'W	Essau (Barra)	13°29'N 16°33'W
Tanji Fish Curing Site	13°21'N 16°48'W		

### Species List - follows Bourne and Casement (*Sea Swallow* 42)

#### Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*

Singletons were seen irregularly flying near the coast but biggest count of 80 birds which flew into Banjul Bund Road area on 5th and started fishing in the deep water channel.

#### Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Small parties met with in the mangrove swamps and Abuko Reserve. Biggest coastal count was of over 150 roosting and later fishing at Banjul Bund Road on 5th.

#### Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

One at Cape Point 4th. Then four together on the water near Banjul Docks seen from the Barra Ferry on 9th.

**Audouin's Gull *Larus audouini***

Three recorded at Cape Point (all adults) on 4th and an adult there the following day. Eleven together (8 adults + 3 second year birds) roosting with Terns at Toll Point on 5th. Two (1 adult + 1 first year bird) at Tanji Fish Curing Site on 6th and two second year birds at Tanji Bald Cape also on 6th.

**Lesser Black-backed *Larus fuscus***

Small flocks recorded daily but notable counts of 50 birds at Toll Point on 5th; then 51 at Tanji Fish Curing Site on 6th and 216 at Tanji Bald Cape the same day. The majority of birds counted though were immatures.

**Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus***

Small flocks noted regularly along the coast. Notable counts of 870 at Banjul Bund Road on 5th; 490 at Tanji Fish Curing Site on 6th; 1,200 roosting and bathing at Kotu Pools on 7th, and 470 at Banjul Docks on 9th.

**Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus***

Three together at Banjul Bund Road on 5th Feb and then at least 25 at Banjul Docks on 9th.

**Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei***

Two adults at Banjul Bund Road on 5th; 15 (6 adults/9 immatures) at Tanji Bald Cape on 6th; one immature at Cape Point on 7th; one immature at Kotu Stream on 7th and two adults at Cape Point on 8th.

**White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus***

Five fishing with Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* in a deep water channel at Banjul Bund Road on 5th and a singleton resting at Kotu Ponds on 7th. Some of the birds noted at Bund Road were moulting into summer plumage.

**Black Tern *Chlidonias niger***

At least ten fishing in deep water channel at Banjul Bund Road on 5th; over 100 together fishing offshore at Ghana Town Beach on 6th; 40 fishing offshore at Cape Point on 6th; and four at Kotu Ponds on 7th. Several of these birds were also noted moulting into summer plumage.

**Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica***

Five at Cape Point on 4th; ten fishing in deep water channel at Banjul Bund Road on 5th; three at Toll Point 5th Feb; 45 fishing close offshore at Bijoli Beach 6th; over 60 fishing close offshore at Ghana Town Beach the same day; one at Cape Point 7th; one at Cape Point 8th and one at Banjul Docks 9th. Moulting in head feathers was noted on a few birds.

**Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia***

Seen regularly in small groups. Notable count of 108 roosting at Toll Point on 5th.

**Little Tern *Sterna albifrons***

30 fishing together offshore at Cape Point on 4th and then 17 roosting at Toll Point on 5th. These were the only records.

**Royal Tern *Sterna maxima***

Recorded daily in small groups. Notable count of 97 roosting at Toll Point 5th; 55 at Barra Point and then 33 at Essau (near Barra) on 9th.

### Lesser-crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One roosting with some Royal Terns at Bund Road on 5th; two roosting in the large tern flock at Toll Point on 5th; two roosting with Royal Terns at Tanji Bald Cape on 6th; Five birds at Banjul Docks and three of possibly the same birds at Barra Point later in the day on 9th. All the birds were checked for possible confusion with Royal Tern but were definitely identified as this species.

### Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Seen daily in small fishing groups. Notable counts of 135 at Banjul Bund Road on 5th; 940 birds roosting together at Tanji Bald Cape on 6th and 138 at Cape Point later on the same day.

### Comment

The week was almost exclusively along the coastline at the more accessible locations counting seabird roosts and parties of seabirds fishing off the shoreline. Much work was done beforehand regarding the separation of Lesser-crested Tern from Royal Tern in the field. Many of the Lesser-crested located were found at roost conditions and were readily separated from the Royal Tern. Wintering Lesser-crested Terns were once described as scarce in The Gambia from breeding colonies in the Eastern Mediterranean, but in recent years there has been an increase in sightings (up to 20 at times) attributed to possibly greater observer input (Gore); and with the recent discovery of breeding colonies in Libya (Meininger *et al.* in *British Birds* 87:160-170) it is possible that the birds had been overlooked as Royal Terns.

The numbers of Audouin's Gulls were also interesting but in view of the recent success and expansion of this species from the Mediterranean (WRP Bourne pers comm) perhaps numbers of wintering birds will continue to increase in West Africa. Hopefully more work can be done in the future on the status of this species as holiday firms now offer summer packages to Gambia which will allow for "out of season" observations and when the political climates of countries further around the West African coastline improves access will be a little easier and safer.

Finally, thanks must go to Dr. WRP Bourne for initial comment on our field observations and also to Bubacarr Barry, a longstanding friend in The Gambia who drove his taxi in almost impossible conditions to get us to some of the coastal locations. Perhaps the most interesting discovery during the trip was the group of Ghanaian fishermen, who have a commune at Ghana Town in The Gambia. These individuals load their gaily painted, ocean-going canoes and then sail along the West African coastline to Ghana to sell their produce. This seemingly hazardous journey would produce some excellent sea watching and you certainly would not go hungry with a boat full of dried fish!

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## SEABIRD NOTES FROM NEW ZEALAND - 13 SEP-5 NOV 1994

by Captain D.M. Simpson, MN.

I managed to take the opportunity of some leave from the Fly River to visit New Zealand, and made notes of the following seabirds:

### Yellow-eyed Penguin *Megadyptes antipodes*.

I first encountered several of this rare species on the surface in Patterson Inlet, Stewart Island on 24 Sep. I was in the company of Phil Smith, a local wildlife guide and tour operator. I was astonished to see and hear one of these birds deliberately answer Phil's imitation of its call. At this time of the year the species is nesting in loose colonies, in the woods adjoining the inlet. Later, at dusk on 20 Oct, near the Royal Albatross colony on the Otago Peninsular, South Island, I watched several birds come out of the sea, then waddle up the beach and into the scrub, where their nest-sites are located.

### Fiordland (Crested) Penguin *Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*.

On 5 Oct, whilst taking a scenic boat trip along the beautiful and rugged Milford Sound, Fiordland, I was fortunate to see several on the surface. This species breeds in this area, also in loose colonies in the woods..

### Little (Blue) Penguin *Eudyptula minor*.

On 21 Sept, at Acker's Point, Stewart Island. Whilst standing on the cliff at the lighthouse I enjoyed watching these birds swimming at high speed under the surface, resembling small porpoises. I observed this species again on 3 Nov, at sea off North island, whilst taking a boat trip from Auckland to Great Barrier Island.

### Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea (epomophora) sanfordi*.

On 20 Oct I took a boat cruise close past Taiaroa Head, Otago peninsular, the well-known mainland breeding colony of this species. Some 15 birds were present mostly wheeling about with their dynamic soaring flight, but for one pair standing on the grassy cliff-tops 'billing' and engaging in courtship ritual. The species closely resembles the Wandering Albatross, and I am sure I have overlooked it during my earlier years when sailing Australian waters. One good identification mark of the Royal Albatross is the black cutting edges to both mandibles of the bill. This can be seen at a fair distance, and is lacking in the 'Wanderer'.

### Buller's Albatross *Diomedea bulleri*.

This is the most common of the smaller albatrosses (mollymawks) in the seas around Stewart Island, and I observed several in the Foveaux Strait on 26 Sep, whilst crossing on the ferry from Stewart Island to Bluff.

### Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli*.

One bird only seen, on 15 Sep, soaring over the cliffs near the port of Bluff, Stewart Island.

### Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*.

This is the 'Muttonbird' of Stewart Island; Maori people on the local islands are allowed to collect young birds as food. I stayed on Stewart Island from 17-26 Sep, but saw none; obviously the birds had not yet arrived. On 20 Oct, at sea off the Otago Peninsular near Dunedin, huge numbers were present on the surface, in great flocks.

Parkinson's (or Black) Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*.

I saw a few of these on 3 Nov, at sea off North Island and within sight of Little Barrier Island. They were singles, not in flocks, and individuals flew very close to the boat. A medium to large blackish/brown petrel with a black-tipped ivory coloured bill, it breeds on Great and Little Barrier Islands between November and May. This particular boat trip from Auckland to Great Barrier Island probably offers the best chance of seeing this rare species.

Diving-petrel sp. *Pelecanoides* sp.

A single diving-petrel was seen on the surface on 21 Sep, off Acker's Point, Stewart Island. The species was not identified - both the Common *P. urinator* and the South Georgian Diving-petrel *P. georgicus* breed in this area.

Captain D.M. Simpson MN, c/o 4 Ruswarp Lane, Whitby, N. Yorks. YO21 1ND.

## FLY RIVER UPDATE - JANUARY 1995

by Captain D.M. Simpson MN.

On 6th January I completed my 11th tour of duty on the Fly River. During this three-month period I saw no birds new to me, but I did manage to add five species to my Fly River list, bringing the total to 294.

Four of these species were found on the small mangrove island of Sorbu Wabuda, which lies between Umuda and Wabuda Islands in the river at ARM 0. These were:

Great Thick-knee/Beach Stone-Curlew *Esacus magnirostris* (1)

Sanderling *Calidris alba* one small flock

Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris* (2)

Brown Honeyeater *Lichmera indistincta* (1)

The last addition to my list was a good clear sighting of an Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus* in riverine forest at ARM 381, on the Irian Jaya (west) bank.

Over the past year I have written to many authorities and societies in an effort to stimulate some interest into setting up Nature Reserves and/or National Parks along the Fly River. Despite some encouraging replies and a personal line of correspondence with the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Minister for Conservation and Environment, I have been unable to make any real progress.

During this period, and for the first time, two large Malaysian/Chinese logging companies have begun operations in the Fly River. The first one has obtained backing from the PNG government to build a road from Ajambak village (ARM 250) which will meander past Lake Murray, and eventually emerge back on the Fly River somewhere upstream of Kiunga. This road will pass through many miles of virgin lowland rainforest, and the logging company has been granted rights to clearfell the forest for one mile in from each side of the road. It is obvious to me that the road is actually being built for the sole purpose of getting at the forest, despite claims to the contrary from the government. Another big logging concern is to begin operations on the south side of the Fly River Delta at about ARM 45.

Both these operations are encroaching into areas that are earmarked "Very Important" for Bio-diversity conservation, by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Conservation International.

This two-pronged attack marks the beginning of the end for the Fly River rainforests, and unless something is done quickly all will be lost. I am particularly interested in conserving the stretch of lush riverine forest between ARM 105 and 155. This lies between the two areas of intrusion, and is apparently not under immediate threat.

If anyone reading this has any ideas to offer, or feels that he or she can help in any way at all, I will be happy to hear from them.

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## OBSERVATIONS ASHORE

### BERMUDA REVISITED

by Chief Petty Officer (Comms) G.H. Walton RFA

Bermuda - the name to me conjured up visions of my youth - Ireland Island, Malabar, the Dockyard, Somerset - and more importantly the memories of 1963, and my first foreign port of call, as an Ordinary Seaman in the Royal Canadian Navy. It had been nearly 22 years since my last visit to these enchanted islands aboard HMSC *Yukon*, so you can imagine my delight when we were diverted there to discharge cargo on our voyage home from the Falkland Islands. It was a pleasure to discover that the islands had not changed as dramatically as other places around the world. I had changed, however, and was eager to walk ashore to sample the delights of the avifauna.

The first thing one sees, as the ship approaches, is the imposing sight of Gibbs Hill Lighthouse; then appears the **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaeton lepturus catesbyi*. These beautiful birds are known to the locals as "Longtails", and are considered the harbingers of spring. The majority arrive in March to breed, going to sea by day to feed, returning at night. The popularity of this species is indicated by its image on the obverse on the Bermuda 25 cent coin.

Saturday morning saw me in Hamilton to seek out a bookstore, and obtain a guide to the local birding. This proved no problem, and I purchased a copy of *A Guide to the Birds of Bermuda* by Eric J.R. Amos (published by the author, in 1992). This was a good move because, without it, I would have seen birds, but not fully understood "What, Where, Whither and When". A visit to Flatts Aquarium (Zoo, Natural History Museum and Aviary) and St. Georges followed, and then it was time to call it a day.

Sunday dawned bright and warm, so I headed out on foot to the Long Bay Natural Reserve, in Sandys Parish. Leaving Malabar behind, I crossed the Cut Bridge on to Ireland Island South, and struck out towards Somerset. Walking through Lagoon Park, I was met by the banter of a **Great Kiskadee** *Pitangus sulphuratus*. The species was introduced to Bermuda from Trinidad, in 1957, to assist in the control of the lizard population. This brightly coloured tyrant abounds island-wide, and so do the lizards! Also noted were **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus*, **Bank Swallows** *Riparia riparia*, **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* and **Starlings** *Sturnus vulgaris*.

The Malabar Road, on Boaz Island, tracks alongside the rocky coastline and small sandy beaches, which were home to many **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres*. En route, I encountered the unforgettable **Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis*, first seen as a red flash crossing the road at eye-level, then settling in a nearby tree. At Long Bay I saw the ever-present **Great Kiskadee**, **Turnstones**, **Common Ground Doves** *Columbina passerina* and **Sanderlings** *Calidris alba*. After remonstrating with two individuals concerning the behaviour of their dogs, I set out for the Gilbert Nature Reserve, in Somerset. At this delightful reserve I saw **Grey Catbirds** *Dumetella carolinensis*, **Northern Cardinals**, **House Sparrows**, **Bank Swallows** and **Mourning Doves** *Zenaida macroura*. After some refreshment at a fine hostelry in Somerset village, I bussed back to Ireland Island to give the Dockyard and Harbour a proper look. Here were **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis*, **Herring Gulls** *Larus argentatus*, **Great Black-backs** *Larus marinus* and more **White-tailed Tropicbirds**. After a pint at the "Frog and Onion", in the dockyard, I headed back on board, vowing to visit Spittal Pond and the Bermuda Railway Trail the following day.

This trail follows the course of the old railway between Somerset and St. Georges. It had been converted into an excellent cycling and walking path, and is probably the best way to see the birds and the beautiful scenery. Early Monday morning I joined the trail at Somerset; this section passes through some of the loveliest woodland, composed mainly of Fiddlewood and Bermuda Cedar. It was rich in birdlife - **Great Kiskadees**, **Swallows**, **Goldfinches**, **Starlings**, **Cardinals** and various **warblers**, and the track echos with perpetual birdsong. The trail from Somerset Bridge to Evans Pond passes the perimeter fence of the old US Naval Air Station Annexe, formerly known as "N.O.B". On the other side of the trail were sited numerous nesting boxes provided by the authorities, but I unfortunately saw no residents. Leaving the Railway Trail at the Port Royal Golf Club, I caught a bus, and set off in the direction of my objective - Spital Pond.

A 35 acre National Park, Spital Pond is located in Smith's Parish, on the southern shore. It is primarily a bird sanctuary, maintained by the Bermuda National Trust, Audubon Society, and the Department of Agriculture. The first thing I noticed was the peace and tranquility, interrupted only by the ambient birdsong, and the sound of the surf breaking below the precipitous cliffs, beyond the dense woodland. These cliffs were home to many **Rock Doves** *Columba livia*. The path follows a 8.5 acre brackish pond where, lingering with my binoculars, I saw **Moorhens** *Gallinula chloropus*, **American Coots** *Fulica americana*, **Canada Geese** *Branta canadensis*, a **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* and two **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*. I have it on good authority that the latter were escapees from Flatts Aquarium - one has been there nine years, the other five.

I was impressed by the obvious hard work and dedication that a small band of enthusiasts and the Bermudan authorities have put into the preservation and protection of their avifauna - no more so than that of keeping a state secret the breeding sites of the **Bermuda Petrel** *Pterodroma cahow*, a species thought to be extinct for 300 years. For me, Bermuda used to mean a run ashore, **Black Seal rum** and cold beer. But, as I have said, I had changed. My short visit only provided 30 species for my list, where an average of 200 species are recorded

each year. To quote from Eric Amos:

"Just a few of the recent highlights are listed as an incentive to go birding in Bermuda:-

- 30 species of wood warblers in a day - 9 October 1985
- 43 thrushes of four species, the Arboretum - 9 October 1985
- 75 Connecticut Warblers in a day - 19 October 1987 (Hurricane Emily)
- 82 species in a day - 19 October 1982
- 194 herons of five species - 19 October 1986
- 200 waterfowl - 18 species of duck + two species of geese. Feb'77
- 10,000 Bobolink - 25 September 1987 (Hurricane Emily)
- 20,000 pelagic birds of nine species - 27 May 1994 (all day)
- 500-600,000 landbirds passing overhead - 0001-0600, 16 Oct' 1982"

In conclusion, the next time you call at Bermuda, do not go straight for the pub. Take your binoculars, go birding, and then have a pint. I guarantee you will find it a rewarding experience. Most birding areas are accessible to the public, but I strongly recommend Eric Amos's guide, which shows the prime sites, contains a comprehensive check-list, species account, numerous line drawings and coloured plates - a boon for the novice and experienced alike.

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## INDIAN INTERLUDE

by David Dobson

Last autumn I spent a month working in a Leprosy Mission hospital in West Bengal, some 250 miles west of Calcutta. It was a month that was busy and fulfilling in many ways, not least for the opportunity it gave me to get to know a few of the birds in the region.

They say that India is always a shock at first, and our hot bumpy cloth-to-the-nose ride from the airport and through the slums of Calcutta certainly provided that. It also provided an early introduction to the attendant House Crows *Corvus splendens*, Black Kites *Milvus migrans* and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*. Later, on our twelve hour journey by train and minibus out to the hospital, we saw large numbers of Common Mynahs *Acridotheres tristis*, Asian Pied Starlings/Pied Mynahs *Sturnus contra* and Black Drongoes *Dicrurus macrocercus*, and these six species were to be around wherever I went. Another very common bird was the Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*, and a group of them flew screeching over our heads as we arrived at the hospital.

We moved to our quarters; the two married couples to the official guest house half a mile away, and the rest of the group of ten to rather spartan temporary accommodation near the male wards in the hospital itself. This arrangement had its disadvantages, and I shall never hear the term dawn chorus again without recalling the horrible Indian ritual of throat clearing and



spitting which acted as my early alarm clock. However, as we were all to eat together in the guest house I had the prospect of several walks each day to and from meals, and the countryside - paddy fields, ponds and tree groves - was enchanting.

I quickly fell into a daily routine, and usually began the day as the sun rose, slipping through the trees of the settlement to the early chattering of the Pied Mynahs and the thin call of the tiny Tickell's Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*, dull in its plumage but ever busy among the trees and shrubs: Black-hooded Orioles *Oriolus xanthornus* often provided a contrast of colour and song. My road to breakfast then took me out of the settlement, where on most mornings I could be confident of seeing a Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* on a bush to the left of the gate, and to my right, flitting about the scrub, a group of White-rumped Muni *Lonchura striata*, their dark pointed tails very distinctive. On then along a causeway across the paddy, where I could scan the scene with my binoculars and expect to see Indian Pond Herons/Paddy Birds *Ardeola greyii*, Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and Openbill Storks *Anastomas oscitans*. Often too there would be a Pied Kingfisher *Cerile rudis* perched on the telephone wires. Early morning also seemed to be the best time to watch the Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* and I had many fine views of this handsome and graceful bird, which often hovered over the paddy and dived swiftly, with wings held high. The other regulars on this early walk were roosting Little Green Bee-eaters *Merops orientalis*, often ten or more of them huddled tightly together on the telephone wire, looking like a row of dark spikes with their sharp curved beaks and long stiletto tails. They would later provide a marvellous flying display, shimmering green and copper in the sun, as they darted after insects. Other birds seen at this early hour were Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and a pair of Shikras *Accipiter badius*.

The guest house, set among the trees, was another good area for watching birds (and monkeys and squirrels too). Rufous Treepies *Dendrociitta vagabunda (rufa)*, Greater Coucals *Centropus sinensis* and Greater Golden-back Woodpeckers *Chrysocolaptes lucidus* were the most obvious, but I soon became adept at spotting the little Coppersmith Barbets *Megalaima haemacephala* and Red-vented and Red-whiskered Bulbuls *Pycnotus cafer* and *P. jocosus*.

The lunchtime walk in the heat of the day was usually less productive, the sun shimmering high in the sky and fewer birds active, but it was always a good time for watching the White-rumped Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* wheeling high above. It was also during one such mad-dog sally that I spotted a small eagle or buzzard soaring over open ground. I watched it dive to the ground to snatch up a small rodent, and followed it to its feeding perch in a banyan tree. As I stood beneath, its prey dropped to the ground. I willed myself to keep absolutely still, and received my reward when the bird dropped down and completed its meal, less than ten feet away from me.

Work for the day usually finished at 4.30, and that gave me time to wander in the paddy fields before dark. I very much enjoyed sitting by the large ponds, alive with fish and covered with the most beautiful water lilies. Here I would find several Pond Herons, Little Cormorants *Phalacrocorax niger (pygmeus)* and various egrets, also occasionally Red-wattled Lapwings *Vanellus indicus* and White-breasted Waterhens *Amaurornis phoenicurus*. Stork-billed Kingfishers *Pelargopsis capensis* were also often present, as were Indian Rollers

*Coracias benghalensis*. With dusk came the **Spotted Owlets** *Athena brama*, and there were usually two or three on the telegraph wires when I walked back to the hospital after supper.

All of this was very enjoyable, but there were frustrations too, for there were several small birds that I failed to identify. My field guide was pretty good, but it covered the whole of South East Asia and often lacked the detail I needed. My binoculars too, though admirably compact for travelling around, weren't really good enough to achieve positive identification, though they attracted a great deal of attention as I walked around the fields. Lastly, I'm afraid I lacked expertise, and I felt the need for a local ornithologist as a companion. But for all that, it was a marvellous experience.

David Dobson, Downgate Cottage, Steep Marsh, Petersfield, Hants. GU32 2BE

## SUNGEI BULOH NATURE PARK, SINGAPORE - REPORT OF VISIT 13 APRIL 1994

by Petty Officer S. Copsey RN

While HMS *Exeter* was on Armilla Patrol, the ship paid a visit to the island of Singapore, in April 1994. During our time alongside I spent several days birdwatching, and one afternoon after a hot cycle ride I found myself at the Sungei Buloh Nature Park, in the NW corner of Singapore, close to the Kranji Dam. The area has been designated a wild reserve since 1989, but the reserve centre and amenities were fully opened to the public in December 1993 by the Prime Minister of Singapore.

The reserve centre includes a gift shop, cafeteria, restrooms, and a display area all maintained to a high standard. I had the added bonus of visiting mid-week, when the reserve was very quiet. Quoting from the guide, the reserve itself "covers an area of 87 hectares of mudflats, fresh and brackish water, mangroves, coconut groves, grassy areas and small orchards".

I arrived at the reserve in a rather warm state so, after paying my one dollar entrance fee, I went to the cafeteria for much needed refreshment. The reserve has a nearly circular track, so after rehydration I opted for anti-clockwise and set off. Each hide provided a welcome respite from the burning sun and stifling humidity, and the hides were in excellent repair. I had been sitting down absorbing the lush greenery for less than five minutes when a **White-bellied Sea Eagle** soared across the mangroves to no more than 200ft above the tree-tops - a great start to what proved to be a memorable afternoon. The eagle was followed by a flock of 80 **Whimbrel** which flew in and commenced feeding in front of the hide along with **Common** and **Marsh Sandpipers**, which were already present. A single **Collared Kingfisher** was perched above the mudflats, calling into the distance. **Purple** and **Grey Herons** were next on the list as I viewed damp grassland from the next hide; one bird of each species could clearly be seen feeding almost side by side.

It was from this hide that I came across the first of the day's **Malayan Water Monitors** - these huge lizards can grow to 2.5 metres in length, and are an impressive sight. Although the individual I saw was around the 1.5 metre mark, it was nonetheless a fine reptile. It pushed its way through the grass directly in front of me before slipping into the water and gliding effortlessly away. As it

left, its place in the grass was taken by a female **Waterhen**, stalking among the stems and picking up the odd titbit.

The path led from there into the main mangrove section of the reserve, where an extremely well-made raised board-walk carries the viewer 5-10 ft above the mudflats. The next 1000m was fascinating: **White-throated Kingfisher** was the next new species for me, perched above the water for a brief moment before darting off into the distance, nearly skimming the water surface. A **Little Heron** could be seen feeding on the opposite side of the slow-moving body of water, and a bit further along I came across **Cinnamon** and **Yellow Bitterns**, both of which were easy to spot out in the open, unlike our own shy native species. Then I had one of the best sightings of the afternoon - not a bird, but a fish - a **Mudskipper**. I'd seen them on the TV at home, but actually to watch this fish climb up onto the mud was an amazing experience. Just as I approached the end of the board-walk, the first spots of rain started to fall from a sky that 20 minutes previously had been a deep blue, but had now turned to an increasingly ominous shade of dark grey.

I got to the next hide just in time, as the heavens opened and a tropical thunderstorm ensued for the following hour, with some of the heaviest rain I had seen in years. One advantage of the downpour was that it cleared the air, and I emerged into a much cooler atmosphere. But the penalty was biting insects; the sudden change in climate had brought them out in their thousands, and insect repellent was essential! I next went to the prawn pond where a mass of waders were feeding in the shallows, including **Pacific Golden Plovers** resplendent in full breeding plumage. **Great** and **Little Egrets** were in the thick of the action, feeding in the deeper areas of the pond and, as a contrast, **White-vented Mynahs** stayed at the water's edge scavenging odds and ends.

After leaving the prawn pond, I walked to the tower hide. As its name implies, this is a 30 ft high construction of steel, with a viewing area at the top looking out over the canopy of the reserve. I had an excellent view and watched a pair of **Brown-throated Sunbirds** flirting with each other at the top of the coconut palm opposite my position. Just beyond them three **Pink-necked Pigeons** sat together at the top of another tree. It was from this vantage point that I saw my first snake of the visit - a **Banded Malayan Coral Snake** was slowly ascending one of the support stanchions to my position at the top, but I was thankful when it returned to the ground a few minutes later, since I had no desire to share the hide with a poisonous serpent!

After that excitement I saw an **Ashy Tailorbird** and **Scaly-breasted Munia**, both hopping around in the undergrowth at the edge of the footpath. The last bird of note I saw was a single **Black-shouldered Kite**, perched on the top of a lamp-post right out in the open near the reserve centre. As I watched, it hopped off and glided across the road into an adjacent pasture, where both **Pacific** and **Barn Swallows** were catching their daily quota of flying insects.

**Conclusion.** My list of identified species totalled 30, but there is no doubt that I missed many birds that afternoon, and others I failed to identify, so I have omitted these from this report. One book that was invaluable, not only in the reserve but during my whole stay, was the *Times* edition *The Birds of Singapore* by Hails and Jarvis. It is unfortunately very difficult to get a copy in the UK, and I bought mine the day after I arrived on the island.

S. Copsey, 20 Shephard's Close, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3AJ.

# LANDBIRD OBSERVATIONS ON INDONESIAN ISLANDS from Captain K. Salwegter MN

The following list of landbirds sighted in Indonesian waters during the period 9 September to 17 October 1993 was received (without identification or other details) from Captain K. Salwegter Netherlands MN, whilst a passenger aboard Indonesian pinnace *Duta Bahari*:

- Bali - Sanur.** (East side of Bali)  
 9 Sept. Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* (1)  
 Black-billed Magpie *Pica pica* (1)  
 10 Sept. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (1)  
 Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* (1)
- Gili Island - Meno. (Gili Meno).**  
 12 Sept. White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* (1)
- Satonda Island.**  
 14 Sept. Sumatran (or Great-billed) Heron *Ardea sumatrana* (1)
- Komodo Island.**  
 16 Sept. Crow-billed Drongo *Dicrurus annectans* (1)  
 Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* (5)  
 White-bellied Sea Eagle (one, hunting fruit bats)
- Flores Island, near Labuhanbajo.**  
 17 Sept. White-bellied Sea Eagle (1)
- Lembata Island - Bay of Waienga.**  
 22 Sept. Great-billed Heron (1)  
 1500-1600 White-bellied Sea Eagle (1)
- Alor Island - Kalabahi Roads.**  
 23 Sept. Great-billed Heron (1)
- Wetar Island - beach on west side.**  
 24 Sept. Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* (2)  
 1500 Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris* (4)  
 House Crow *Corvus splendens* (2)  
 Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* (2)  
 Mountain Imperial Pigeon *Ducula badia* (2)
- Damar Island - beach on north coast.**  
 27 Sept. Collared Kingfisher (1)  
 White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis* (1)
- Banda Neira Island.**  
 29 Sept. Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea* (1)  
 White-bellied Sea Eagle (1)
- Karaka Island (Pulau Karaka)**  
 1700/29 Sept. Collared Kingfisher (1)
- Sulawesi - Tawaeli (central Sulawesi)**  
 12 Oct. Collared Kingfisher (1)
- Sulawesi - Lake Poso, near Banchea**  
 13 Oct. Wreathed Hornbills *Rhyticeros undulatus* (4)
- Saluopa - ricefields near Saluopa waterfall.**  
 14 Oct. Javan Pond Heron *Ardeola speciosa* (1)  
 Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (6)
- Sulawesi - highway between Makala and Kalosi**  
 17 Oct. Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis* (1)

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Naurois, R. de, 1994. *Les Oiseaux des îles du Golfe de Guinée (São Tomé, Príncipe et Annobon)*. Institute de Investigaç o Cient fica Tropical, Lisbon, pp. 208, ISBN 972-672-629-8.

Naurois, R. de, 1994. *Les Oiseaux de l'archipel du Cap Vert*. Institute de Investigaç o Cient fica Tropical, Lisbon, pp. 188, ISBN 972-672-628-X.

Hazevoet, C.J. 1995. *The Birds of the Cape Verde Islands*. B.O.U. Checklist No. 13, British Ornithologists' Union, Tring, pp 192, ISBN 0 907446 17 5.  17.

The first two of these lists of the birds of the interesting ex-Portuguese West African islands are in parallel French and Portuguese, and summarise the work of a veteran observer who has been studying them for a third of a century, and made many original observations. Both consists of simple descriptions of the geography, vegetation and avifauna, one-page accounts of each species under the headings - vernacular names, wing length, description, distribution, habitat, food, voice and reproduction - with 1-2 references (of which there is a limited list, most to works by the author, but none later than 1990, so recent rediscoveries in the Gulf of Guinea are only mentioned in a postscript). Coloured figures of the birds, and their closest mainland allies, are shown; also a summary of some biological conclusions. They should serve a useful purpose as basic field guides.

The third work says much the same things about the Cape Verde Islands, at greater length, in English, (which is not much spoken locally), with coloured photographs, and a vast (and often irrelevant) bibliography extending up to 1994, but omitting the two preceding works. Its main novelty is the conversion of the conventional three endemic species and 16 races into 14 "phylogenetic" species, presumably in order to promote the ornithological tourist trade. It is to be hoped that the promised B.O.U. List for all the less-well-known Gulf of Guinea Islands may prove more useful?

W.R.P.B.

### A Wreck of Seabirds in Brazil

Lima, P.C. 1994. *Mortandade de Aves Oce nicas no Litoral da Bahia*. A report to the IV Brazilian Ornithological Congress, Recife. Photocopies, pp. 17, 5 tables, 6 graphs, 30 photographs. Obtainable from Pedro Cerqueria Lima, Via Atlantica Km 9 P lo Petroqu mico de Cama ari, Cx. Postal 011 CEP 42810000, Cama ari-Bahia, Brazil.

A wreck of seabirds occurred on the east coast of Brazil between June and August 1994. Thirty bodies were found per km, indicating a mortality reaching five figures. The 3,489 birds examined included 2,380 (68%) of the North Atlantic race of Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea borealis*, 740 (21%) Great Shearwaters *Puffinus gravis*, 144 White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, including one of the spectacled race *P.a.conspicillata*, 110 Antarctic Prions *Pachyptila desolata*, 40 Narrow-billed Prions *P. belcheri*, 31 Atlantic Petrels *Pterodroma incerta*, 11 Manx Shearwaters *P. puffinus*, six large skuas *Catharacta* sp., and up to three birds of 14



other species probably resulting from normal mortality; four out of six mollymarks and about 10% of the other birds were oiled. Sixteen (0.7%) of the Cory's Shearwaters had been ringed - 13 on the the Salvages and three in the Canaries - at least ten of which were one year old and one two years old, indicating that they were immature non-breeders; their average weight was 500g, whereas it is normally 800g in the north (but two which came aboard at 37.7°S 41.9°W on 10 Feb '86 were 720g and 690g). All but one of the mollymarks in the photographs were also immature. Thirteen Great Shearwaters and six other birds (but only one Cory's Shearwater) survived; when fed fish and vitamin B, the Great Shearwaters increased in weight from an average of 470g to 720g, in 15 days. Nearly 80% of 100 shearwater bodies contained squid beaks and intestinal parasites, and over 40% plastic. (It is reported in *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 115: 120 that this wreck extended at least as far south as São Paulo).

W.R.P.B. and P.A.Z.

### BIRDWATCHING AT SEA - USEFUL TIPS.

The following is a reprint of the leaflet which is now sent to all new members, on joining, and is published here for the guidance of all.

1. **BIRDWATCHING AT SEA.** There are plenty of ways to go about this, but the easiest is from the bridge, scanning either side of the bow in order to minimise the risks of double counting birds which are following the ship. Birds not seen elsewhere may be following in the wake, so should be recorded separately, at intervals. Remember size can be very deceptive, also colours over water, especially when looking into the sun and when the sun is low.

2. **SPECIES.** To build up our knowledge, we are especially interested in winter sightings of terns, petrels and skuas, in particular the following seabird species: Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*, Roseate Tern *S. dougallii*, Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* (Far East population), Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia roseus*, and Spectacled Eider *Lampronetta fischeri* - thought to be the ice-edges of the Bering Sea.

3. **AREAS.** Of particular interest are:

Off routine shipping routes;

The tropical and southern oceans all round Africa, Asia, South America, Oceania and Antarctica, including the Falklands;

The Persian Gulf, especially in the aftermath of pollution as a result of the Gulf War in 1991.

4. **REPORTS.** In order to make the most of members' efforts, the Society's policy is to give priority in Sea Swallow, and in the half-yearly Bulletin to reports of:

Afloat. Everything.

Ashore. A. Abroad. Seabirds and their colonies. Landbirds sighted on expeditions, or if the area is infrequently visited.

B. UK. Unusual sightings of seabirds off our coasts, and landbirds in MOD establishments.

Members are encouraged to report other sightings to the local county society, and to take part in national enquiries sponsored by the BTO etc. (These are normally notified in the *Bulletin*).

5. **RECORD FORMS.** All records are of interest, but it is helpful if the standard RNBWS record forms are used; for supplies contact Mr Bill Bailey, 8 Grange Close, Gosport, Hants, PO12 3DX (see inside cover of *Sea Swallow*).

6. **Unusual or Unidentified birds.** Always write down everything you can remember, and if possible make a rough sketch before you go to the books. Sightings of rare species are much more likely to be accepted if you have good field notes. Photograph all unidentified birds in the hand, from all angles, against a ruler, (or object whose dimensions can be measured).

7. **SUBJECTS.** Of special interest are:

A. **seabird breeding colonies.** Information on the size and whereabouts of seabird colonies, especially on the more remote islands. Much useful information can be obtained passing by at sea, as well as on land, notably the presence of breeding species difficult to detect ashore, such as nocturnal petrels, and cliff-breeding species. Count all the nests in one section, and then multiply by the number of equal size sections in the colony. If possible, support with a photograph quoting when, where and what fraction of the colony is included.

B. **Food.** What they are feeding on, and method of catching/feeding. Note what birds feed together over fish shoals, and behind trawlers.

C. **Birds in the hand.** Complete bird examined in the hand (BEH) form, giving full details and measurements, with photograph, if possible. Record, photograph, and if possible preserve any vomited food and parasites.

D. **Dead birds.** Causes of death, if known. Cut off wings legs and tail feathers, and send in with form, for positive identification. Dry in open air, tie together and label with date and place of collection. Record bill measurements, and note colours of iris, eye-ring, bill and leg (in life). Retain any dry skeletons found ashore; consider stripping body to retain bones and flight feathers, and drying skeleton of scarce birds that die at sea. Specimens can be roughly skinned, and the inside of the skin rubbed with salt or borax. (but see also para 11 below).

E. **Rings etc.** Always check live and dead birds for rings, wing tabs and or dye markings. Make a special effort to make notes, and save parts of ringed birds of known age.

8. **FEEDING BIRDS ABOARD SHIPS.** Birds may be too exhausted to feed, but the following are worth a try:

**Raptors and owls.** Raw meat wrapped in thin layer of cottonwool (in lieu of feathers).

**Seabirds, herons and kingfishers.** Place small fish, or pieces of fish lengthwise in the bill.

**Songbirds.** Water with glucose or sugar. Crumbs, scraps of cheese or soft fruit. In cold climates, bringing birds into the warm may help, and for hot climates, bring into the shade.

9. **BIRD BOOKS.** The following are recommended for seabirds:

*SEABIRDS: an identification guide* Peter Harrison, Croom Helm Ltd 1983 £19.95

*A Field Guide to Seabirds of Britain and the World* Heinzel and Tuck, Collins 1978, £10 - but probably only second-hand now. The Hon. Secretary can suggest books for landbirds, and suitable bookshops.

10. **RNBWS LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES.** Do make contact with other members of RNBWS for local knowledge and advice. These are listed inside the rear cover of *Sea Swallow*. Curators of local museums are also valuable sources of information, and are usually eager to help.

11. **THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM - BM(NH).** Specimens of unusual birds which die aboard ship are welcomed by BM(NH), to add to their collection. They are best preserved by injection with 80% alcohol, or immersed in spirit for a few days (ask for assistance from the sick bay); an incision in the belly/vent region should be made so that the alcohol can permeate the specimen, while it is soaking. The body should then be wrapped in cotton wool lightly soaked in alcohol, so that the specimen does not dry out in transit, and then sealed in a plastic bag after squeezing out surplus air. Dried out corpses are also welcome, but each should be wrapped up separately in newspaper and sealed in a plastic bag or tin; otherwise there is danger of reducing the lot to a pile of bones! Specimens should be posted by air mail labelled URGENT to: The Bird Group, Department of Zoology, The Natural History Museum, Tring, Herts HP23 6AP. If they are very perishable, or advice is needed, it might help to first phone (01442 82481) or FAX (01442 890693). Specimens should be accompanied by a fully completed BEH form, and a copy of the latter sent to Michael Casement (Editor of *Sea Swallow*).



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### THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY (RNBWS) Joining Form

1. I am interested in joining the RNBWS and wish to be enrolled as:  
(☒ ☐ as appropriate)
- ☐ Full Member £8 (or £7 covenanted)
- ☐ Associate Member (those not eligible as a full member but wishing to assist the objectives of the society) £8 (or £7 covenanted)
- ☐ Library Member (receives *Sea Swallow* only) cost of *SeaSwallow* (£6) plus postage
2. Name, initials, rank and decorations (BLOCK LETTERS)  
.....
3. Permanent address\*  
.....  
.....
4. Present Ship of Station\*  
.....
5. Subscription herewith: £.....  
Please send me a Banker's order form and Covenant form  
☐ ☐

Date..... Signature.....

To: The Hon. Secretary, RNBWS, 19 Downlands Way, South Wonston, Winchester, Hants SO21 3HS  
*\*Please inform the Hon. Secretary of any changes*



## USEFUL ADDRESSES

**Hon. Member and Adviser, RNBWS:** Dr W.R.P. Bourne, MBOU, CFAOU, Zoology Dept., University of Aberdeen, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN. (Home tel: 01224-732348)

## RNBWS LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

**Dartmouth:** Dr. Richard Porter, Britannia Naval College, Dartmouth, South Devon TQ6 OHJ. (01803-837233)

**Devonport Area:** K.E. Partridge, 165 Stanborough Road, Elburton, Plymouth, Devon PL9 8NY (01752-40475)

**Portsmouth Area:** Lt. Cdr. B.F. Witts, OBE, FRGS, RN, Oakwood, Duffield Lane, Woodmancote, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 8PZ (01243-371497) or *HMS Excellent* (25235/25148)

**Portland:** M. Rogers, Portland Bird Observatory and Field Centre, Old Lower Light, Portland, Dorset. (01305-820553 day only)

**Southampton:** Frank Vosey, 53 Rotterdam Towers, International Way, Weston, Southampton (01703-44038)

**Faslane:** Lt. M.J. Howells RN, HMS *Neptune*, Faslane, Helensburgh, Strathclyde G84 8HL

**Humber Area:** Captain A.S. Young, MN, The White Cottage, 38 South Gate, Hornsea, N. Humberside, HU18 1RF.

**South Wales:** M. Sullivan, 219 College Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff. CF4 2NV

**Gibraltar:** Dr Clive Finlayson, MBOU, 30 Ross House, Red Sands Road, Gibraltar.

**Naples:** Mark Walters, 181 Via Morghen, Vomero, Napoli, Italy.

**Arabian Gulf:** Major M.D. Gallagher, MBOU, PO Box 668, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman (Tel: 605.400 (Museum), 560.267 (home). Colin Richardson, % Dubai Bird Group, PO Box 2825, Dubai.

**Bombay:** J.S. Serrao, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Bombay 400-023 (Tel: 24-38-69/24-40-85)

**Madeira:** Dr. Francis Zino, Avenida do infante 26, Rez-do-Chao 'C', 9000 Funchal, Madeira. (Tel: 63292).

**Falklands:** Ian Strange, The Dolphins, Port Stanley.

**Australia:** Captain N.G. Cheshire MN, 4 Willora Road, Eden Hills, Adelaide, South Australia 5050. (Tel: Adelaide 3702212). or Mr A.E.F. Rogers, 26 Westleigh Drive, Westleigh, Sydney, N.S.W., 2120.

**U.S.A.:** Dr R.G. Wolk, Ph.D., North Carolina Museum of Natural History, P.O. Box 27647 Raleigh, North Carolina 27611.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*; authors do not need to be RNBWS members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing, together with figures and diagrams. Those with facilities to do so are encouraged to send on 3.5" diskette, in ASCII format, together with a print-out.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by 31st May.

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